

ΑΝΑΛΕΚΤΑ ΒΛΑΤΑΔΩΝ

59

HIEROMONK ALEXANDER (GOLITZIN)

ET INTROIBO AD ALTARE DEI

THE MYSTAGOGY OF DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS PREDECESSORS
IN THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN TRADITION

*Οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ναὸς Θεοῦ ἐστε
καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν;
I Cor 6:19*

*Καὶ ἐμφανίσω αὐτῷ ἐμαυτὸν...
καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλευσόμεθα καὶ
μονὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα
John 14:21-23*



ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΙΚΟΝ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΠΑΤΕΡΙΚΩΝ ΜΕΛΕΤΩΝ
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗ
1994

ΩΝ

Τὸ παρὸν ἐκδίδεται τῇ εὐγενεῖ χορηγίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγοῦς
Ἰδρύματος “ΛΕΩΝ ΛΕΜΟΣ”

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ANALECTA VLATADON

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INTRODUCTION

Βούλεται γὰρ αἰεὶ καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ
Λόγος καὶ Θεὸς τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνσωματώσεως
ἐνεργεῖσθαι τὸ μυστήριον

St. Maximus the Confessor
Ambigua VII, PG 91 (1084D)

A. APOLOGIA AND THE LIMITS OF CONSENSUS

Let us admit at once that ours is a Christianizing and personal approach to the *Areopagitica*. While we offer no apologies for this, we are obliged to explain it. Briefly, the explanation is as follows: 1) whether admitted or not, every attempt to date that has sought to deal with the *CD* as a single body of thought has, due to the state of the Dionysian problem, engaged the particular scholar's sympathies and presuppositions – most often in a negative manner – to a considerably greater degree than were he dealing with an ancient author whose purposes in writing (or even name) were clearly advertised. Why has the negative judgement, Dionysius as either pagan saboteur or else philosophical incompetent, generally prevailed? We submit that most have judged him by the standards and assumptions of a tradition, that of Western Christianity, other than his own, and thus maintain 2) that there is a case, and certainly room, for a reading of the *CD* both as itself within, and from the perspective of, the Eastern patristic tradition. Since we shall shortly move to the illustration of the first point, let us here elaborate somewhat on the second.

The reader will note that our point of departure, Dionysius as inheriting *and contributing to the Eastern Christian tradition, is identical with our* conclusions. Our argument is frankly circular and its defense must rest on the hope that it will provide an account of the *CD* sufficiently coherent to convince the critic that here is a path to the *Areopagitica* that has been little noted and that deserves attention. Our reasons for supposing it viable in the first place are a blend of personal and objective considerations. It is not a matter of conjecture that the author of the corpus wrote in Greek, lived in the Eastern Empire, and left his influence upon the thought of succeeding generations of Greek-speaking Christians. Indeed, it was the latter fact that first drew our attention to him¹, just as later it was only after a visit of some months to an Athonite monastery and

1. I owe particular thanks to Dr. D. B. Evans, of St. John's University, New York. His series of lectures, given at St. Vladimir's Seminary during the Spring of 1972, provided me with many of the seeds that grew into this thesis, especially the connections between Dionysius and Evagrius. I naturally take full responsibility for any of the thesis' failings.

prolonged exposure to forms of Christian worship largely unaltered since the Byzantine Middle Ages that we began to acquire the feeling for the shape of Dionysius' thought as a mystagogy which informs this thesis². In short, it was (and is) only from within our common tradition that, after long struggles to view him with others' eyes, the mysterious Areopagite began to make a new and yet familiar sense. It does not, then, appear to us farfetched to assume in him the same basic directions of thought that have prevailed in the Greek Church both before and after his time. One must ask, too, if the pseudonym alone could have sufficed to force its swift acceptance – and it was swift³ – had it been alien in spirit and intent to the faith of those who welcomed it. We do not think so, nor, while striving to maintain sufficient detachment to note those features of Dionysius' vision which are disturbing – chiefly a kind of optimistic “eternalist” bias which lacks a central place for tragedy, i.e., for sin and the Cross – do we believe it unwarranted eisegesis to read him as if, barring obvious anachronisms, we shared the same faith and tradition, in short to recognize in his vision our own.

All roads, moving now to our first point, purporting to pave the way into a given author's thought involve something arbitrary on the part of the interpreter. All judgments require a viewpoint. This “uncertainty principle” applies with peculiar force to the Areopagitic writings. Having stated our position, it is time to ask after the viewpoints of prior scholars and the results that have followed from them. We believe the consensus, or more precisely the want of it, concerning the *CD*, is such as to allow for our approach and, even, to demand it.

1. The Dionysian problem: consensus?

The Dionysian corpus is a small affair. It is contained in the slender third volume of the Migne *Patrologia* and embraces three treatises of moderate length, on the *Celestial* and *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*, and the *Divine Names*, one very short essay, the *Mystical Theology*, and finally the *Epistles*⁴. His influence on subsequent theology in East and West, however, has been very great⁵ and, with respect to the East, perhaps even greater than hitherto

2. Here my thanks and deepest gratitude must go to the Rev. Abbot, Aemilianos, and to all the brethren of Simonos Petras monastery, Mt. Athos.

3. See our Conclusions below.

4. In 1990 and 1991 the Dionysian corpus found at last a critical text. The *Divine Names* in *Corpus Dionysiaca* I (Beate Maria Suchla, ed; [Berlin: 1990]) and the rest of the treatises and epistles in *Corpus Dionysiaca* II (Adolf Ritter and Gunter Heil, eds; [Berlin: 1991]). Citations of the corpus will thus feature Migne columns and, in parenthesis, the page and line numbers of the critical text.

5. See the articles by P. Sherwood and A. Rayez, “Influence du Ps.-Denys en Orient,” and by P. Chevallier, H. Weisweiler, G. Dumeige, M. A. Franchboud, S. de St. Antoine, J. Turbesi, M. de Gandillac, A. Ampes, and A. Lempes, “Influence du Ps.-Denys en Occident,” *DSp* 3.286-318 and 3.318-378 respectively.

suspected⁶. To its importance for medieval thought one must add the unflagging interest of modern scholarship. The number of titles devoted to Dionysian studies climbs well into the hundreds and includes the publication of four substantial monographs during the late 1970s⁷. Yet, in spite of the volumes so far devoted to the Dionysian question, "uncertain" remains the one adequate description for the state of the modern consensus.

Two German scholars, Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr, are responsible for the consensus as it has stood since the turn of the century. Independently of each other, both published important articles in 1895 comparing the teaching on evil in *DN* IV.17-33 with Proclus' *De Malorum Subsistentia* and noting the striking parallels⁸. The same year Stiglmayr published a longer article, "Das Aufkommen der Pseudo-Dionysischen Schriften"⁹, in which he argued for a temporal placing of the *CD* in the closing decades of the fifth century and a physical one in the region of Syria-Palestine. He based his case for the dating on the following five points: 1) the absence of any mention of the corpus prior to the early fourth century;¹⁰ 2) the presence within it of Chalcedonian terminology (451 A.D.);¹¹ evidence of Proclus' (d. 482) system of thought;¹² 4) the apparent reference in *EH* III.3.7 to the chanting of the Creed during the Eucharist, a practice initiated at Antioch by the Monophysite Peter the Fuller in 476;¹³ and 5) Dionysius' apparent caution regarding Christological formulae as reflecting the imperial policy determined by the *Henotikon*, in force from 482 to 518¹⁴. Geographically, the use of the Credo, the first citations of Dionysius, and the general liturgical ambiance all point to a West Syrian milieu.

While Stiglmayr continued to produce articles of considerable value¹⁵, particularly with respect to the *CD* and Neoplatonism, the most important single study dealing with Dionysius' pagan background appeared in 1900 with Koch's *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neo-platonismus*

6. See our Concluding Remarks below, 393ff.

7. The 1980s and 1990s have also seen the appearance, in particular, of the works of Paul Rorem and Andrew Louth, discussed below.

8. H. Koch, "Proclus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius in der Lehre von Bösen" *Philolog* t. 54 (1885) 438-454; and J. Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogenannten Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Übel" *HistJ*, t. 16 (1895) 253-273, 721-748.

9. "Das Aufkommen der Dionysischer Schriften, ihr Eindringen in die Christlichen Literatur", in *Jahrsbericht des öffentlichen Privatgymnasiums an der Stelle matutina zu Feldkirch* (Feldkirch: 1895).

10. *Ibid.* 7-20, 45-63.

11. *Ibid.* 22-25.

12. *Ibid.* 26-32.

13. *Ibid.* 34-38.

14. *Ibid.* 39-44

15. See Bibliography below.

*und Mysterienwesen*¹⁶. This monograph, which has remained a kind of Bible for succeeding scholars, set out to present in exhaustive detail the lexical, literary, and notional parallels between the *CD* and the writings of late antiquity dealing with religion and philosophy. In thirty-two sub-headings ranging in subject from "Concluding Formulae"¹⁷ to "Mystical Peace and Silence",¹⁸ Koch manages to provide his readers with what is at once an invaluable reference book and an imposing obstacle, so far insuperable, to any who would contest his conclusion that Dionysius took more from late Platonism, especially Proclus, than any Christian before or since¹⁹.

But what does it mean to say the *CD* borrowed from the pagans? Is it simply a matter of terminology or something deeper? Here we arrive at the crux of the debate, and at the end of consensus. Koch and Stiglmayr established a general agreement as to the "when" and "where" of the Dionysian writings and their general "debt" to late Neoplatonism. The "who" and the "what" of the *CD* continue to inspire the widest debate. With regard to the former, for example, while all are agreed that Dionysius was not the disciple converted by Paul at the Areopagus (Acts 17:34), none can agree on his positive identity. This is not for want of candidates. Over the past fifty years Dionysius has been variously identified as Ammonius Sakkas²⁰, Dionysius the Great of Alexandria²¹, a disciple of Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia²², Severus of Antioch²³, Peter the Iberian²⁴, Damascius last of the *diadochoi*²⁵, and Sergius of Reshaina²⁶ – among others²⁷. Barring the discovery of new evidence, any future attempts at identifying our

16. Published in *Coll. Forschungen zur Christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte* I, Fasc. 2-3 (Mayence: 1900).

17. *Ibid.* 34ff.

18. *Ibid.* 123ff.

19. *Ibid.* 255-259.

20. E. Elorduy, "Es Ammonius Sakkas el Pseudo-Areopagita?" *Estudios Ecclesiasticos* 18 (1944) 501-557.

21. Metropolitan Athenagoras, *Ἡ γνώσις συγγραφεὺς τῶν εἰς Διονύσιον Ἀρεοπαγίτην ἀποδιδόμενων συγγραμμάτων* (Athens: 1932).

22. Ceslas Pera, cited below, 37.

23. J. Stiglmayr, "Der sog. Dionysius Areopagita und Severus von Antiochien" *Schol* 3 (1928) 52-67. See also the refutation by Devresse, "Denys l'Aréopagite et Sévère d'Antioche" *AHDLM* t. 4 (1929) 159-167.

24. E. Honigmann, "Pierre l'Ibérien et les écrits du Ps.-Denys l'Aréopagite" *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, Class des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, t. 47, fasc. 3 (1952). See also the refutation by Hausherr, "Le Ps.-Denys et Pierre L'Ibérien" *OCP* 19 (1953) 247-260, but the thesis has been revived by M. van Esbroeck, "Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite: Honigmann's Thesis Revisited" *OCP* 59,1 (1993) 217-227.

25. Suggested by R. Hathaway, 16 (work cited below, 30).

26. See Hans von Balthasar, "Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis" *Schol* 15 (1940) 16-38.

27. See the article by E. Stéphanou, "Les derniers essais d'identification du Ps.-Denys" *EO* t. 31 (1931) 446-458.

author will doubtless be met with the same failure to convince any save their sponsors as has met all previous efforts. Recent years have indeed seen the effective abandonment of the quest. If the search for the "who" has been dropped, debate continues unabated around the "what". The two are not, of course, entirely unrelated. René Roques has admirably summarized the exegete's dilemma: "La question dionysienne présente cette singularité qu'elle ne peut pas s'éclairer à partir de l'auteur du *Aréopagitica* ou, plus précisément, à partir de ce que nous connaissons de cet auteur". Since "nous ne savons strictement de lui que ce qu'il nous dit lui-même", and that which he has told us has chiefly been in relation to his adopted name, the interpreter must "chercher à s'éclairer l'auteur malgré lui et peut-être contre lui"²⁸. The range of interpretations offered as a result of this "singularité" fit neatly into the gap between "malgré" and "contre". The list of "candidates" provides a striking illustration of the gap being filled: two are pagans (Ammonius and Damascius), two catholic Christians (Dionysius and the anonymous Cappadocian), and three non-Chalcedonian Christians (Severus, Peter, and Sergius). The principle is simple: once the practical impossibility of assigning Dionysius a precise identity is admitted, there is no way the scholar seeking to explain the mysterious author's thought can avoid a considerably greater injection of his or her own, personal inclinations than might otherwise be the case. How else is it possible to explain serious academics producing, in good faith, analyses of the *CD* that are in effect mirror opposites of one another: Dionysius the apologist dressing as a pagan in order to convert, and Dionysius the pagan fifth-columnist adopting the new religion's vesture in order to subvert? Yet both von Ivanka and Hathaway²⁹ wrote over half a century *after* Stiglmayr and Koch, and both made ready use of the latter's publications.

Such are the limits of the consensus, and therewith the conclusion of our apologia. Any interpretation of Dionysius cannot do without the element of the scholar's personal bias. It is for us now to move to a consideration of the scholars whose efforts figure most prominently in this essay and so to how and why we believe our effort justified.

B. IN THE GAP: THE CRITICS AND A VARIETY OF RESPONSES

Perhaps because they concentrated almost exclusively upon literary or historical questions neither Stiglmayr nor Koch troubled much with evaluations of Dionysius' thought as a whole. In so far as they did do so, they appear to have been predisposed to a relatively favorable, i.e., Christianizing view. Thus we find Koch's feeling for the Christian apologist to Neoplatonists³⁰ and Stiglmayr's remark that Dionysius' Christianity comes to us filtered through

28. "Denys l'Aréopagite" *DSp* 3.247-247.

29. Works cited below, 29-30.

30. *Beziehungen*, 257II.

Stiglmayr's remark that Dionysius' Christianity comes to us filtered through Neoplatonic forms as light through stained glass³¹. That theirs was not a reaction which necessarily flowed from the text was demonstrated by H. F. Müller³² some twenty years after Koch's study. He discovers "no trace" in the *CD* of that salvation by the blood of Christ which, he tells us, is the essence of St. Paul's teaching³³ and, by implication, of the Gospel generally. Supported, again, by a detailed comparison of texts, Müller presents a Dionysius who is simply a bad imitator, via Proclus, of Plotinus. "Neither philosopher nor theologian", he merely turned "marketable coin" out of the pagan master's gold³⁴.

1. Hornus: a representative "nay"

Practically the same judgment is echoed some thirty years later in a perceptive article by J. P. Hornus³⁵. Although brief, it is the concise and well-written presentation of an intelligent, Christian scholar's fundamental objections to the *Areopagitica*, and therefore representative of the personal views underlying many much longer studies of the *CD*. We shall, for that reason, devote some space to its consideration.

According to Hornus, the ground of Dionysius' thought is Plotinian mysticism, union beyond knowing with the ineffable One³⁶. He goes on to declare that mysticism itself constitutes an essential betrayal of the NT faith³⁷. Being "ahistoric", it stands in contradiction to the faith of the prophets. It is the product of Greek philosophy's timeless, cyclic vision and can in no way be adjusted to fit the linear thrust of Jewish revelation. Dionysius is thus forced to transform the "bouleversant" event of the Incarnation into a timeless symbol, the God of the patriarchs into the divinity of the hierarchies, and the Trinity of the revelation into the One of the philosophers. Hornus' is a thoroughly damning indictment and, although in later articles he somewhat moderates his suspicions of Dionysius' intentions³⁸, his verdict in essence remains the same: "Denys n'a pas trahi, mais il a été submergé dans une lutte inégale"³⁹. The key to this "unequal battle" lies in the nature of Neoplatonism itself as a philoso-

31. "Die Lehre von den Sakramenten und der Kirche nach Ps.-Dionysius" *ZKT* XXII (1898) 301.

32. *Dionysios, Proclus, Plotinos, Ein historischer Beitrag zur Neuplatonischen Philosophie*, 2d ed. (1926).

33. *Ibid.* 36.

34. *Ibid.* 110.

35. "Quelques réflexions à propos du Ps.-Denys l'Aréopagite et la mystique chrétienne en général" *RHPR* 27 (1947) 37-63.

36. *Ibid.* 58.

37. *Ibid.* 60-63.

38. "Les recherches récentes sur le Ps.-Denys l'Aréopagite" *RHPR* 35 (1955) 404-448; and "Les recherches dionysiennes de 1955-1960" *RHPR* 41 (1961) 22-81.

39. "Les recherches récentes", 447-448.

phical vehicle which, in essence, is “impermeable” to Christian revelation⁴⁰. Any attempt to blend the two must, as in the *CD*, end in shipwreck. For Hornus, then, Stiglmayr’s filter is instead a fun house mirror.

This is unquestionably a valuable statement. It certainly speaks for most recent scholarship in its near-exclusive fixing of attention on the question of Dionysius’ Neoplatonist antecedents, and for many in its assessment of the disastrous outcome, necessarily so, of his use of that philosophy. Is Hornus’ judgment a just one? The reply largely depends on what one considers to be the nature or genius of Christianity itself. If the heart of the Gospel is the atonement through Christ’s blood, then the *CD* will be viewed as a gallant failure – at best. The Cross, though present, is not at the center of Dionysius’ thought. If, on the other hand, the content of Christian tradition, of the NT and even of St. Paul himself is not, as we hope to show⁴¹, exhausted by a unique concentration on Golgotha and the forgiveness of sin, Dionysius will appear in rather a different light, and even Neoplatonism will seem less threatening. Hornus’ honest bias is that of one formed in the Western Christian, specifically Protestant, tradition. In judging the *CD* it is too easily forgotten that that tradition was – and is – not the only one in Christendom. It was certainly not Dionysius’ own.

Let us turn to the other, more specific questions raised by the article. With regard to at least one of them, Hornus himself supplies the answer. The “perpetual ascent” that he rightly recognizes in Dionysius’ notion of *Θέωσις*⁴² must surely wreck any maintenance of cosmic “cycles”. There can be no “eternal return” and, although Hornus is also correct in noting the importance of Dionysius’ circle imagery in relation to the all-embracing round of divine love (*ἐρωσ*)⁴³, the static, repetitive quality of the pagans’ vision is still effectively destroyed. The ends of Dionysius’ circle meet in God’s infinity and, if the creature’s progress into that infinity be everlasting, a certain decisive value is necessarily accorded to motion or growth, and so to time. Room is thus also opened for the eschatological, the Resurrection⁴⁴, whose presence Hornus notes and dismisses⁴⁵. The destruction of the pagan circle is not a shipwreck, either. Dionysius does it deliberately and in accord with precedents already given him in the Christian tradition⁴⁶.

Does the timeless/historic distinction hold good elsewhere, for example in relation to the Incarnation? Here we must ask what Dionysius means by “symbol”. If he means simply a stage to be surpassed or else the representation of some spiritual state, a moral paradigm or exemplar, then indeed one may dismiss

40. “Les recherches 1955-1960”, 81.

41. See Chapter V, 234-241 for the NT, and 242ff for Dionysius’ predecessors in the patristic tradition.

42. “Réflexions”, 54-55.

43. See Chapters I and II below, 66-68 and 97-100 respectively.

44. See Chapter IV below, 213-219.

45. “Réflexions”, 54.

46. I am thinking particularly of his debt to Gregory of Nyssa; see Chapter VII.

his Jesus as purely a tool, an “accident” in the sense that he could be done without. We shall maintain that Dionysius instead understands “symbol” as a bringing-together, a true meeting and the medium of the encounter, as “sacrament” in short⁴⁷. Jesus is the supreme symbol in that he is the unique mystery, the power enabling encounter, the milieu of encounter, and the one who is encountered. He is indeed “timeless”, forever, but this is not a sentiment unknown to the NT (Heb 13:8). It is true that Dionysius concentrates on the NOW present in Jesus, a NOW in which the infinities meet, which joins the “circle’s” ends, and whose εἰκὼν is the Church. But it is also true that the Arcopagite, admittedly not without some tension and ambivalence, both recognizes and strives to take account of that other aspect of εἰκὼν which, stressing the element of the “unlike” and “imperfect”, points toward the eschatological transformation required for our “perpetual ascent”⁴⁸.

Jesus as the divine milieu brings us to Dionysius’ most original – and problematical – contribution to Christian thought, the hierarchies. Here as well we find Hornus’ most penetrating questions⁴⁹. What, he asks, is the relation, if any, between Dionysius’ emphasis on direct, “ecstatic” experience of the deity in the *DN* and *MT*, and the elsewhere apparently rigid maintenance of the hierarchies? Are the two approaches wholly separate or, in fact, contradictory? Does the visible, human hierarchy correspond exactly to the invisible realities of grace, i.e., does progress in the spiritual life correspond precisely to the literal ascent of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy? We shall try to show⁵⁰ that the two approaches do form a coherent whole in relation to the ruling notion of symbol-icon and the Incarnation. Our argument will not, however, be completed until we have dealt with the Evagrian and Syrian contributions to the *CD* in the thesis’ final chapters⁵¹. We will admit here that Dionysius does betray a certain incoherence, in part we believe because he simply does not indicate that he is often writing of one or another of the different aspects proper to the nature of an εἰκὼν. In part, too, Hornus once again unwittingly points toward the answer to his questions in noting at once the “exteriorization” of grace with respect to the hierarchy and later, unaware of the connection to be drawn between them, the “interiorization” of God in Dionysius’ mystical theology⁵².

In relation to the hierarchies, Hornus points finally to the problem of participation, μέθεξις, as the glue of the Dionysian system⁵³. By implication, we learn, this raises difficulties with respect to the Christian doctrines of creation and Trinity. Although he does not use the term, Hornus is nonetheless referring here

47. See below, Chapters III and IV, esp. 127-130 and 220-232 respectively.

48. See again Chapter IV below, 218-219.

49. “Réflexions”, 38-44.

50. See Chapters III and IV below, esp. 147-163 and 168-176 respectively.

51. See Chapters VIII and IX below, 322-348 and 373-385 respectively.

52. “Réflexions”, 56.

53. *Ibid.* 41-44.

to the monism of which Neoplatonism has often, perhaps wrongly, been accused⁵⁴ and to monism's manifest incompatibility with Christian teaching. Our reply will depend on maintaining Dionysius' basic orthodoxy through noting his use of a distinction in God's own being allowing for "participation" without endangering the transcendence of the divine οὐσία (or ὑπεροουσία)⁵⁵ and, later, the precedents for this position that exist in patristic literature prior to the *CD*⁵⁶. Our view regarding the *CD*'s triadology will shortly be indicated in relation to another scholar's critique in the following subsection.

2. Neoplatonist or Christian?

Not all the scholars concentrating on the *CD*'s debt to Neoplatonism take quite so dim a view of its nature and results as Hornus. Endre von Ivanka, in a series of articles reprinted in *Plato Christianus*⁵⁷, maintains that Dionysius is a Christian apologist who deliberately set out to "sabotage" the Neoplatonist ordering of the world through voiding that system of its content and building up a Christian vision within the emptied shell. He rightly notes the importance of Dionysius' rejection of the descending causal chains characteristic of Plotinus' and the later Neoplatonists' more elaborate hierarchies, a rejection that obliterates the almost mathematical ontogeny constituting so great a part of the philosophers' efforts to order the world rationally, and that fundamentally alters the original sense of the triad, μὴν-πρόοδος-ἐπιστροφή – so important to the *CD* – as an attempt to describe the descent of being⁵⁸. Rather than bestowing being, Dionysius' hierarchies are shorn of any demiurgic function and transmit instead knowledge or illumination. At this point, however, von Ivanka goes a step too far and denies the hierarchies any function whatever. The knowledge of God he properly sees as direct, but he is surely wrong to see in hierarchic illumination merely a dangling appendix and hierarchy itself as a sort of ornamental ploy left in place solely to attract the potential convert from philosophy⁵⁹. The *CH* and *EH*, two fairly long treatises, become inexplicable if exclusively viewed as apologetic devices and Dionysius' originality, once his vision of the hierarchies as objects of contemplation is ignored, is left less than half expressed.

54. See Chapter II below, 79-80.

55. See Chapter I below, 54ff.

56. See Chapters VI, VII, VIII and IX below, 256-258, 262-263, 293-297, and 360-361.

57. *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (1964). The articles in question are: "Der Aufbau der Schrift 'De divinis nominibus' des Ps.-Dionysios" *Schol* 15 (194) 386-399 (*Plat. Christ.*, 228-242); "Ps.-Dionysios und Julien" *Wiener Studien* 70 (1957) 168-178 (*Plat. Christ.*, 243-254); "Teilhaben, Hervorgang, und Hierarchie bei Ps.-Dionysios und bei Proclus" *Actes du XIe Congrès International de Philosophie* Vol. 12 (1953) 151-158 (*Plat. Christ.*, 254-261); and "Inwieweit ist Ps.-Dionysios Areopagita Neuplatoniker?" *Schol* 31 (1961) 384-403 (*Plat. Christ.*, 262-289).

58. See "Teilhaben" and "Inwieweit . . . ?" *Plat. Christ.*, 258-260 and 272-274, 277-278 respectively.

59. "Inwieweit . . . ?" *Plat. Christ.*, 274-276, 278, and 285.

Some years later we find Roland Hathaway, as noted above, taking up exactly the opposite position⁶⁰. He reverses the roles of wolf and sheep's clothing in order to read Dionysius as attempting to transmute Christian monotheism into Neoplatonist metaphysics, "Proclus in a Biblical setting"⁶¹. Hathaway's presuppositions and general approach can be seen at a glance in the following remarks from his commentary on *Ep. IX* (1109B):

Pseudo-Dionysius' description of Providence as without beginning (ἀναρχος) or end (ἀτελεύτητος), together with the *implicit acceptance of Proclus' metaphysics*, implies that the objects of Providence are also eternal... *peculiar caution* is needed in approaching Pseudo-Dionysius... and in understanding the studied art of writing presupposed in every line and every word⁶².

This sounds very sinister indeed, but the effort Hathaway calls for is a little excessive. Proclus cannot be discovered complete within the *CD* without very great originality. Hathaway tries, as in his assertion against the letter of the text that Dionysius "gives causality to the subordinate orders"⁶³, but he remains even more unconvincing than von Ivanka. Perhaps the most useful section of his book is his analysis of the debate concerning the authorship of the *CD*⁶⁴, to which we might add certain of his remarks concerning the importance of λόγος and θεομός for the hierarchies⁶⁵.

Between these two extremes we find the magisterial study of the Dionysian hierarchies by René Roques, *L'Univers Dionysien*⁶⁶, to which our essay is very considerably indebted. Inasmuch as we depend so greatly upon Roques' work here and in his other writings⁶⁷ – our Chapter III being in substance a kind of summary and gloss on *L'Univers* – we will confine ourselves here to two brief comments. First, although Roques' attitude to Dionysius is fundamentally a sympathetic one, his approach still appears to us to depend too exclusively on Neoplatonist precedents. In the whole of *L'Univers* there are but 87 references to patristic authors⁶⁸. Secondly, while he does declare the *MT* to be at the heart of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy⁶⁹, Roques' distinction between θεολογία (talk about

60. *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius: A Study in the Form and Meaning of the Pseudo-Dionysian Writings* (The Hague: 1969).

61. *Ibid.* xvii.

62. *Ibid.* 112-114, (the emphasis is mine).

63. *Ibid.* xvi.

64. *Ibid.* 18ff.

65. *Ibid.* 38-50; and see our Chapter III below, 121-127.

66. *L'Univers Dionysien: structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Dionysius* (1954).

67. For all the articles of Roques which we have consulted, see our Bibliography below, 434.

68. See his "Index des auteurs", *L'Univers*, 367-371.

69. *Ibid.* 328-329.

God, the *DN* and *MT*) and *οἰκονομία* (the created world, *CH* and *EH*), which he uses in order to treat the hierarchies in isolation from the rest of the corpus⁷⁰, sets up an artificial division in Dionysius' thought and breaks up the coherency of his system.

Roques' slight distinction becomes an impassable chasm in Jean Vanneste's study, *Le Mystère de Dieu*⁷¹. Vanneste seeks to explain Dionysius on the knowledge of God solely in terms of the *DN* and *MT* without recourse to those principles of theurgy embodied in the *CH* and *EH* which, he maintains, constitute an entirely separate mode of knowing⁷². The unity of the *CD* is not only broken but, thus considered in isolation from the hierarchies rather than embedded in them, the *DN-MT* can safely be approached through the virtually exclusive medium of Proclus' thought and grave doubts cast upon the question of Dionysius' Christian inspiration⁷³. Deprived of its setting within the Church and liturgy Vanneste finds it reasonable to read into the *MT* a "natural mysticism" devoid of any specifically Christian elements, devoid indeed of Christ⁷⁴, and expressive instead of a cold, impersonal rationality, "an autonomous and groping ascent of the human spirit towards the absolute"⁷⁵.

While we shall endeavor below to reply to the assertions regarding the respective "autonomies" of the human spirit⁷⁶ and the *DN-MT*⁷⁷, we would like to direct a few remarks here toward Vanneste's attitude with respect to the troubled notion of "mysticism". We do so not only because the term itself and what it implies are crucial to understanding the *CD*, but also because Vanneste has provided us with a truly classic example of the scholar falling victim, in all good faith, to his own background. A "mystical theology" may be based on experience, and certainly on at least the possibility of immediate "contact" with God⁷⁸, but it is not necessarily about that experience⁷⁹. Vanneste knows no such distinction. According to him a "true mystic" must refer to his own experience, declare his private joy⁸⁰. Dionysius thus becomes in his eyes "the theoretician who... is

70. *Ibid.* 29-30.

71. *Le Mystère de Dieu* (1959); see also his related articles: "La théologie mystique du Ps.-Denys" *TU* 80 (1960), 401-415; "Is the mysticism of Ps.-Dionysius genuine?" *IPQ* 3 (1963) 286-306; and "La doctrine des trois voies dans la théologie mystique du Ps.-Denys" *TU* 93 (1966) 462-467.

72. *Mystère*, 32-35 and 196-197.

73. *Ibid.* 17-19 for example.

74. *Ibid.* 216-217.

75. "Genuine", 304.

76. See below, Chapter II, 108-112.

77. See below, Chapter IV, 168-176 and 229-231.

78. See, for example, the article by Gabriel Patasci, "Palamism before Palamas" *ECR* 9 (1977) 64-71; and the use of his interesting expression, "ontological touching", 66.

79. We are thinking here of the position stated so well by Vladimir Lossky cited below, 38-39.

80. "Théologie mystique", 401-404.

more interested in maintaining the exact and tight articulation of... [his] conceptual structure than in *describing the unpredictable details of a vital experience*".⁸¹ We italicize the last as it betrays its author's presupposition of a real incompatibility between the theoretician and the contemplative, theologian and mystic, and his insistence that the subjective element dominate in any properly "mystical" writing. This attitude must surely discover its origins in Vanneste's own Roman Catholicism. It invalidates, or at least ignores, the witness of the greater part of Greek patristic tradition within which the degree of subjectivity, i.e., direct reference to personal experience, is very limited indeed. A writer such as the eleventh-century saint, Symeon the New Theologian, is almost unique. We therefore assume Vanneste to be judging Dionysius on the basis of Western Christian mystics, perhaps of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, rather than against the Areopagite's own background: Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius of Pontus, and generally the whole spiritual and particularly monastic tradition of the Eastern Church. Here we also believe that we are at the root both of Vanneste's refusal or failure to see the *MT* and *DN* as inextricably part of the larger whole that includes the hierarchies, and of his having given the pride of place to Dionysius' sources in pagan philosophy rather than the credit that is due his Christian predecessors. Only thus, we think, could he have dismissed the *CD*'s references to traditional Christian themes as in essence a "smoke-screen"⁸².

Another clear case of personal predispositions and confessional traditions informing a competent scholar's approach is given us in Bernhard Brons' massively footnoted monograph, *Gott und die Seienden*⁸³. A quotation from Martin Luther to the effect that Dionysius was more Platonist than Christian opens the essay and sets its tone throughout⁸⁴, somewhat belying Brons' claim to be engaged in a strictly objective, terminological analysis⁸⁵. Dionysius' vocabulary is indeed most exhaustively investigated, but the accompanying commentary, although liberally salted with references to Beierwaltes' study of Proclus⁸⁶ and other sources relevant to Neoplatonism, looks very little toward patristic writings. One place where we do find the ecclesiastical tradition specifically cited serves precisely to illustrate our point concerning bias. In concluding his sharp critique of Dionysius' triadology, Brons declares it an indication of the *CD*'s

81. "Genuine?" 290.

82. *Mystère*, 38-39. See the sober warning against autobiography as a hermeneutical principle guiding the study of mysticism in B. McGinn's recent *The Foundations of Christian Mysticism* (1991) xiv, as well as his remarks on "ecclesio-logical setting, scriptural matrix, and sacramental practice" as "integral to all Christian mysticism, especially in its formative stages", 64-65. We think this includes Dionysius as well.

83. *Gott und die Seienden: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Neuplatonischer Metaphysik und christlicher Tradition bei Dionysius Areopagita* (Göttingen: 1976).

84. *Ibid.* 9.

85. *Ibid.*

86. W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (1965).

“casualness” with respect to the tradition that it failed to follow Augustine’s lead in using the triad, οὐσία-ζωή-νοῦς, as a basis for the necessary (and in the *CD* lacking) Trinitarian distinctions⁸⁷. He makes the same accusation earlier, this time adding Marius Victorinus’ name to Augustine’s⁸⁸. We cheerfully grant the truth of this accusation but decidedly not the implication Brons would draw from it. Dionysius did not and could not make the identification suggested here because this possibility had, over a century before him, been ruled inadmissible by the Cappadocians in their defense of the Trinity against Eunomius⁸⁹. And even had Dionysius been willing to admit this distinction, in defiance of his own ecclesiastical tradition and his inherited apophaticism, it would certainly never have been at the urging of an Augustine whose writings remained unknown in the Greek Christian world until the fourteenth century. When Brons therefore refers to the “ecclesiastical tradition”, he cannot but mean, exclusively, the Latin Christian Tradition. His approach to the *Areopagitica* thus reminds one of nothing so much as those Tudor and Elizabethan gentlemen, such as a Giles Fletcher or Richard Chancellor, whose reports back to England from sixteenth-century Muscovy revealed a fine grasp of detail, and a remarkably similar blend of hostility, contempt, and bewilderment with regard to the alien whole. At Brons’ hands Dionysius becomes not only incoherent⁹⁰, but inexplicable. Again, he is at a loss to account for the “ontological no-man’s land”, *Ortslosigkeit*, occupied in the *DN* by the Platonists’ formerly self-subsistent νοητά, a phenomenon whose existence he correctly notes yet whose rationale he fails to place in the essence/energies distinction already adumbrated by the Cappadocians and others⁹¹. Instead, he can only denounce it as the result of Dionysius’ “ruinous modifications” of Proclean metaphysics.

The same combination of accurate observation and skewed interpretation occurs again and again throughout this book which, with respect to the points it seeks to make, amounts in effect to a hugely documented expansion of the article by Hornus we examined above. The basic accusation remains the same: Dionysius is trying to put into Christian vesture a monism alien to the Gospel, ἡ φυσιολογία φαίνεται θεολογία τις οὐσα⁹². Brons misses the mark here because he fails to recognize in Dionysius a vision of nature and grace which, while it does not confuse the two, nevertheless refuses to see them as necessarily in conflict. In short, Dionysius’ understanding of the Fall is not St. Augustine’s and neither is his the latter’s sharp distinction between nature and super-nature⁹³. In this, too, the author of the *CD* both differs from the Western tradition and reflects his own,

87. *Gott u.S.*, 129.

88. *Ibid.* 36.

89. See Chapter VII below, 288-294.

90. See his conclusions, *Gott u.S.*, 330ff.

91. *Ibid.* 130-147; and see our Chapters I and VII below, 54-71 and 290-297 respectively.

92. *Ibid.* 236; Brons is here citing Proclus, *In Tim.* 217.25.

93. See Chapters II and IV below, 84-88 and 177-181 respectively.

That Brons is unconscious of this distinction and continuity is revealed again in his analysis and dismissal of the Incarnation in the *CD* as a pointless, docetic doublet of Dionysius' scheme of Providence (Hornus' "timeless symbol")⁹⁴, of the created world and God as forming a single, timeless organism (monism and the "circle")⁹⁵, and finally in opposing Roques' "cosmetic" and "churchifying" account of the hierarchies with his own portrait of a rigidly-layered ontology radically alien to the categories and requirements of a theology based on Scripture ("hierarchy vs. history and revelation")⁹⁶.

It remains for us quickly to note the remaining monographs dealing with the *CD* against its philosophical background. Corsini's *Il Tratto De Divinis Nominibus*⁹⁷ is a useful and competent study of the *DN*'s debts to, and departures from, Plato's *Parmenides* and subsequent Neoplatonist commentaries on the dialogue's first two hypotheses. The ἐν μὴ ὄν and ἐν ὄν distinction is read as the source of Dionysius' apophatic and cataphatic theologies. Corsini is careful to indicate the *DN*'s basic allegiance to a single God and Creator, the central importance of its second chapter and the ἐνώσεις/διακρίσεις distinction as basis for the discussion of the Unity, Trinity, and names of God⁹⁸. His detailed analyses of the treatise's remainder with reference to the *Parmenides* and, particularly, Proclus' commentary⁹⁹ continue to be of value. We must part company sharply with him, however, in his assignment of the names, or νοητά, to the realm of created reality¹⁰⁰. We feel it to be taken chiefly in order to avoid the essence / energies distinction he specifically rejects¹⁰¹, as well as the emanationism of a Proclus. Once again, we find here a failure to allow due influence to Dionysius' precedents in patristic literature.

We make the same objection, in relation to the same issue, to the otherwise excellent and revealing study of late Neoplatonism and its Christian commentators by Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*¹⁰². While we shall have occasion to refer below to Gersh's analysis of the thought of Iamblichus and successors in relation to the *CD*, especially the *DN* and *MT*, his rejection of the essence/energy distinction as a true distinction in God fails to convince us. He claims it to be derived essentially from the difficulties of the transcendence/immanence problem of God, i.e., no more in effect than two different ways of dealing with the relation between divine cause and created effect, and caps his

94. Gott u.S., 237-276, esp. 274.

95. *Ibid.* 168-236, esp. 233-234.

96. *Ibid.* 29-97. For Brons' attitude toward Roques, see *Ibid.* 16-17.

97. *Il tratto DE DIVINIBUS NOMINIBUS dello Ps.-Dionigi e i commenti Neoplatonici al Parmenide* (1962).

98. *Ibid.* 39-44.

99. *Ibid.* 45-111.

100. *Ibid.* 110ff.

101. *Ibid.* 136.

102. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Pre-history of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden; 1978).

argument with the assertion that the distinction is to be found nowhere in Proclus¹⁰³. The latter statement may indeed be true, but it still does not reply to the debt we maintain Dionysius owes to his patristic antecedents. It is perhaps of some note that on this issue all three scholars, Corsini, Brons and Gersh¹⁰⁴, agree on rejecting the distinction first insisted on among modern scholars by Vladimir Lossky¹⁰⁵, while remaining quite at odds among themselves as to what exactly the *θεία ὀνόματα/ωντά* do refer to in the *DN*. Perhaps Brons, with his frank bewilderment before the fact of their *Ortslosigkeit*, is least the victim of his preconceptions.

Two other books from the 1970's, Herman Goltz' *Hiera Mesiteia*¹⁰⁶ and Walter Neidl's *Thearchia*¹⁰⁷, need not detain us long. We gladly accept Goltz' assertion that Dionysius had the Church as his basic theme¹⁰⁸ and we can grant as well a certain truth to his argument in favor of a sociological explanation of the *CD*¹⁰⁹, particularly the muted conflict between bishop and monk¹¹⁰. Certainly, the corpus must have both reflected and later have been reflected in the hierarchical society of its age. On the other hand it is surely wrong to see in the sociological element the whole thrust of Dionysius' purpose just as we believe it a serious error to accept, as has Goltz, that Dionysius has been once-and-for-all unmasked as a patent fraud and thoroughgoing Neoplatonist¹¹¹. Again, Goltz has made no attempt to read him in the light of the prior tradition. The same is the case with Neidl's assumption that the Christian God of Revelation cannot but be identical with the *ens realissimus* of the Angelic Doctor and intrinsically antithetical to the *πρόον* of Plotinus¹¹². The apophatic theology of the Fathers, and so of Dionysius, has been dismissed without, as it were, a trial.

From the middle of the last decade to the present the most prolific writer on matters Dionysian has been Paul Rorem. His *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols*¹¹³ appeared first, followed in relatively short order by a collaborative effort with Colm Liubheid, the translation into English and annotation of the *CD*¹¹⁴, then argument

103. *Ibid.* 166, note 184; see also 156-165, and his more recent article, "Ideas and Energies in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite" *SP* 15 (1984) 297-300.

104. Four scholars, if we include von Ivanka ("Inwieweit...?" *Plat. Christ.* 279), although the latter offers no argument for his indignant rejection of "Palamism" in the *CD*, see also *Ibid.* 287.

105. See below, 39-40.

106. *HIERA MESITEIA: Zur Theorie der hierarchischen Societät im Corpus Areopagiticum* (1974).

107. *Thearchia: Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Gott bei Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita und Thomas von Aquin* (1976).

108. *HIERA MESITEIA*, 203.

109. *Ibid.* 8-9.

110. *Ibid.* 25-29.

111. *Ibid.* 14.

112. *Ibid.* xvii-xxix.

113. *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: 1984).

114. *Pseudo-Dionysius: the Complete Works* (New York: 1987).

treatise-by-treatise *Commentary* on the corpus together with a charting of its subsequent history in the medieval Greek East and Latin West¹¹⁵, and a considerable number of important articles in the meantime¹¹⁶. Throughout his impressive *œuvre*, Rorem has consistently devoted his attention to the painstaking analysis of the Dionysian text, being directed in his research by, in particular, the prior work of Vanneste, Roques, and P. Scazzoso – to whom we would certainly add the impress of B. Brons. On the one hand, his careful attention to the text itself has uncovered real and genuinely significant features of Dionysius' thought hitherto ignored. He underlines, for example, the real unity of the *CD* based on the liturgy, as opposed to the bifurcation of Vanneste¹¹⁷, and points out the importance of Moses in the *MT* as "a Dionysian prototype... for the hierarch" of the *EH*¹¹⁸. On the other hand, because his attention is fixed on the Areopagite's sources in Neoplatonism, particularly Iamblichus¹¹⁹, and because, it seems, of an assumption (as with Hornus) that this philosophy is fundamentally alien to the Christian faith, particularly for a scholar of the Lutheran tradition¹²⁰, his presentation of the *Areopagitica* emphasizes the latter as exclusively an intellectual endeavor, a kind of "head trip:" "Dionysius' entire enterprise is fundamentally an epistemology"¹²¹. There is little, in short, that is genuinely Christian about Dionysius. In one article Rorem even takes up, if rather diffidently, Hathaway's proposal of Damascius (or one of his circle) as the real author of the *CD*¹²². This suggestion is dropped in the later works, but Dionysius' Christ remains a "cosmetic figure" adorning a system whose rigorously metaphysical underpinnings finally empty it of any ostensibly Christian elements¹²³.

The key to Rorem's argument is the very unity itself of the *CD*. His argument that the *MT* represents the "methodological prologue" for Dionysius' subsequent exploration of biblical and liturgical symbols, an argument that requires a reordering of the traditional sequence of the treatises (the new order is used for his translation of the corpus)¹²⁴, effectively presents the *MT* as a kind of

115. *Pseudo-Dionysius: a Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (New York/Oxford: 1993).

116. Most notably, perhaps, his "The Place of the *Mystical Theology* in the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus" *Dionysius* 4 (1980) 87-98, and his contribution, "The Uplifting Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius", to the collection edited by B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, and J. LeClercq, *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: 1988) 132-144.

117. See *Symbols*, esp. 3-9 and 126-131, together with *Commentary*, esp. 183-213.

118. *Symbols*, 140-141; see also *Ibid.* 132-138 for the figures of Hierotheos and Carpus, and Rorem's article, "Moses as the Paradigm for the Liturgical Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius" *SP* 18.2 (1989) 275-279.

119. See again *Symbols*, 58-63 and esp. 99-109.

120. See *Commentary*, 239.

121. *Ibid.* 93.

122. "Uplifting Spirituality", 133.

123. *Ibid.* 144.

124. For his argument in favor of this rearrangement, see *Commentary*, 207-212 and, at greater length, "The Place of the *Mystical Theology*".

solvent. The negative method inevitably burns away Christian trappings in order to reveal the "timeless" structures of the Neoplatonist vision. Rorem is thus obliged to insist time and again on Dionysius' lack of any eschatology. He is simply "devoid" of it¹²⁵. Yet here, as we shall see, the text of the *CD* presents certain difficulties. In addition, Rorem's exclusive attention to Iamblichus as the source of the Dionysian anagogy¹²⁶ seems to have prevented him from exploring Dionysius' sources in the Christian tradition, for example Origen, whose use of the same term in the context of a Christian Platonism has a decidedly eschatological thrust. The same applies to the Areopagite's adaptation of Iamblichus' cycle, *mone-proodos-epistrophe*, that Rorem rightly underlines as central, but whose transformation at Dionysius' hands he largely fails to see. The cycle in this scholar's eyes remains very much what it was for the philosopher, a way of describing the "timeless" relation obtaining between cause and effect. In short, the failure to place Dionysius in his patristic context lends a curiously one-dimensional flavor to all of Rorem's contributions, impressive though they be. By way of a kind of irony, his portrayal of the Areopagite ends up thus nearly as "timeless" and abstract as he claims Dionysius himself to have been.

3. The voice of the Fathers: Dionysius' relation to patristic writings

There have been certain exceptions to the generally prevailing trend in modern scholarship, given its impetus by Stiglmayr and Koch, to read the Areopagite as exclusively the heir of late Neoplatonism. Some have tried to fight the main current's one-sidedness and to write of the *CD* in its patristic context. One of the first, and certainly one of the most important of these efforts, was the long article by Ceslas Pera, "Denys le mystique et la Θεομαχία"¹²⁷. In spite of his almost certainly untenable attempt to place Dionysius in fourth-century Cappadocia and his over-dependence on the single term, Θεομαχία¹²⁸ Pera nevertheless provides invaluable insight into our author's debt to the Cappadocians who had themselves already engaged in an important debate with Platonism, up to and including (in the case of Gregory of Nyssa) Plotinus¹²⁹. On a number of points, including the question of evil¹³⁰, the names of God and the Eunomian controversy¹³¹, the Trinity¹³², Christianity as universal πολιτεία¹³³, and the Incarnation as fulfilling all hopes¹³⁴, we find his discoveries and conclusions paralleling our own. With respect to the Cappadocians we would only add that in trying to identify Dio-

125. *Ibid.* 120-122.

126. E.g., *Ibid.* 105 and 121.

127. "Denys le mystique et la Θεομαχία" *RSPT* 25 (1936) 5-75.

128. *Ibid.* 7ff.

129. *Ibid.* 10-25, 32-34, and 50-70.

130. *Ibid.* 33-34 and 44; compare our Chapter VII below, 308-309.

131. *Ibid.* 38-39; compare Chapter VII.

132. *Ibid.* 44-49; compare Chapters I and VII below, 51-54 and 297-302.

133. *Ibid.* 62-65; compare Chapter IV below, 219-222.

134. *Ibid.* 67-69; compare again Chapter IV, 181-185.

nysius as a disciple of Basil¹³⁵, Pera has been obliged to overlook the contributions of the Gregories, especially Nyssa, and of Evagrius of Pontus. Sadly, his work was very little taken up by succeeding scholars.

Walter Völker's *Kontemplation und Extase*¹³⁶ was an essay which might have been expected to develop Pera's leads. It is true that Völker rightly notes the importance of the Alexandrian and Cappadocian writers for the *CD* and that he also directs his reader's attention to such important points as the resemblance between Dionysius' ἱεράρχης and Origen's διδάσκαλος as *Geistesträger*¹³⁷, to the importance of Antiochene mystagogy as a prelude to the *EH*¹³⁸, and to the role of the δυνάμεις as basis for the *DN* and to our knowledge of God¹³⁹ – although, curiously, he still refuses to acknowledge the essence/energies distinction¹⁴⁰. Yet overall his effort must be judged disappointing and, regrettably, not altogether convincing. The criticism offered by Roques¹⁴¹, that he ignored the sense of the Neoplatonist elements in the *CD* and of Hornus¹⁴², that he approached the *Areopagitica* by means simply of a pattern or formula he had already developed and applied beforehand to Philo, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, must be seen as having considerable justice. Thus, while his is a truly welcome contribution, it must be said that all too often Völker simply juxtaposes texts and proclaims a direct connection. We agree that Dionysius' piety, *Frömmigkeit*, is an outgrowth of his predecessors'¹⁴³, but his was surely as well a real contribution to their thought, a development and synthesis. Völker's essay lacks the critical element. Very seldom did he seem to make any real attempt to come to terms with the whole shape of Dionysius' thought both as it relates to its sources and as an original effort in its own right.

Now it is precisely that shape which we feel to have been sketched over the course of a series of books and articles by the late Russian theologian, Vladimir Lossky. We see his witness as particularly valuable in that he is one of the very few distinguished scholars to have written on the *Areopagitica* who was also a representative and spokesman of the same Eastern patristic tradition to which Dionysius belongs¹⁴⁴. As such he was peculiarly important for the development of

135. *Ibid.* 44-49 and 73ff.

136. *Kontemplation und Extase bei Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita* (1958).

137. *Ibid.* 79-81; see Chapters VI, 280-281, and VIII, 319-320.

138. *Ibid.* 118-119; see Chapter IX, 349-354.

139. *Ibid.* 179-185; see our Chapter I below, 59-61.

140. *Ibid.* 267ff.

141. "Y propos des sources du Ps.-Denys" *RHE* 56 (1961) 449-464.

142. "Recherches 1955-1960", 164-169.

143. *Kontemplation*, 24.

144. We might also note Georges Florovsky, *The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Writers* (Belmont MA: 1987) 204-229, and Christos Yannaras, *De l'absence et de l'inconnaissance de Dieu d'après les écrits aréopagites* et Martin Heidigger (1971). The Orthodox writers, though, are far from univocal with regard to Dionysius. J. Meyendorff in particular, writing under the influence of Vanneste and others, had very little use for the Areopagite. See his *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, D.C.: 1969) 75-84, and Introduction to

this writer's thinking. If we spoke of Brons' monograph as a kind of expansion – however unconsciously – of Hornus' earlier article, then this essay might be read as a deliberate footnote to Lossky. We feel he deserves a hearing. His views have been too long and too easily dismissed, whether as "superficial"¹⁴⁵ or as blandly incorporating fourteenth-century Byzantine theology into a sixth-century writer¹⁴⁶. It is the last of course which is especially revealing – as much of the critic as of the criticized. Lossky's standpoint is one indeed alien to the majority of Western scholars. So, as we have tried to indicate, was Dionysius' own and, for that matter, Gregory Palamas' – the fourteenth-century Byzantine theologian alluded to above. Palamas is truly a key figure for, if he is understood as far more a representative of the tradition he spoke from than as an innovator¹⁴⁷, Lossky's emphasis on the essence/energies distinction in Dionysius¹⁴⁸ – as well as in writers stretching back to Philo and the NT itself¹⁴⁹ – appears far less unlikely. Both Dionysius' understanding of the "names of God" and his apophaticism take on a different, much less blatantly Neoplatonist aspect once that distinction is granted¹⁵⁰. Again, Lossky's article on "La notion des analogies" shows up Dionysius' hierarchies as less the static expressions of an impersonal cosmic machinery than as the dynamic expressions, images, in the world of divine providence, of God's will, thus as not at all closed to the Incarnation but instead expressive of it, and so as finally the way given us back up to knowledge of and union with God in Christ¹⁵¹. The last directs us back to the sense of a "mystical theology". Here, too, we confess our great personal indebtedness regarding, specifically, this essay and, generally, our whole understanding of Orthodox theology to Lossky's *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* and in particular to its opening chapters¹⁵².

We must also mention Otto von Semmelroth and Hans Urs von Balthasar. The former, in a series of articles published in *Scholastik*, sets out to present an

Gregory Palamas, trans. Lawrence (London: 1964) 187-192 and 204-209. For a critique of Meyendorff's reading, see J. Romanides, "Notes on the Palamite Controversy" *GOTR* IX (1963/64) esp. 250-262.

145. Corsini, *Il tratto*, 40.

146. Gersh, *Jamb. to Eriug.*, 166-167, note 184.

147. See esp. the monograph by John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 2d Eng. ed. (1974).

148. See esp. his articles: "La Théologie Négative dans la doctrine de Denys l'Aréopagite" *RSPT* 26 (1939), 204-221; "Apophysis and Trinitarian theology", and "Darkness and Light in the Knowledge of God", in *In the Image and Likeness of God*, trans. Erickson and Bird (1974) 13-29 and 31-43 respectively.

149. See his essay, *The Vision of God*, trans. Moorhouse (1963).

150. See below, Chapter I, 54-75.

151. "La Notion des 'Analogies' chez Denys le Ps.-Aréopagite" *AHDLM* vol. V (1931) 279-309.

152. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of Sts. Alban and Sergius (1957).

overview of Dionysian theology through working essentially from the text alone and without particular references to the *CD*'s sources¹⁵³. This approach has both its advantages and disadvantages. It enables von Semmelroth, on the one hand, to see and to state clearly what the text itself has to say with regard, for example, to the distinction in God's own mode of being¹⁵⁴, to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as embracing all levels of the created world below the angelic realm¹⁵⁵, and to the "real" (we would say "sacramental") nature and power of "symbol" in the *CD*¹⁵⁶. On the other hand, his own theological background, particularly the assumption of a necessary and sharp divide between nature and super-nature¹⁵⁷, together with a triadology deriving ultimately from Augustine¹⁵⁸, leads him to underrate Dionysius' Christ as a mere "mystagogue"¹⁵⁹ and his Trinity as submerged in the all-predominating "Ev of the Neoplatonists"¹⁶⁰. Once again we insist that Dionysius must be read as a continuation of patristic themes with respect to both points: the cosmic role of Christ, and the Trinity whose nature places it above numerical reckoning, "neither one nor three".

Against von Balthasar's treatment of the *Areopagitica* in the second volume of *Herrlichkeit*¹⁶¹ we can level no accusations regarding any of these issues – save, perhaps, a certain fuzziness (reluctance?) on his part with respect to Dionysius' "Palamism"¹⁶². In every other respect, however, we were delighted and greatly encouraged, after have been directed to this study while engaged in the final stages of the thesis' draft, to find our own reading of the *CD* confirmed and seconded on point after point by so distinguished a student of the Fathers¹⁶³. We found particularly valuable von Balthasar's defense of the authenticity, at least in intention, of the so-called "fictive" treatises mentioned with varying frequency

153. They are: "Erlösung und Erlöser im System des Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita" *Schol.* 20-24 (1949) 367-379; "Gottes überwesentliche Einheit" *Schol.* 25 (1950) 209-234; "Gottes geeinte Vielheit" *Schol.* 25 (1950) 389-407; "Die Θεολογία συμβολική" *Schol.* 27 (1952) 1-11; "Gottes ausstrahlende Licht" *Schol.* 28 (1953) 481-503; and "Die Lehre des Ps.-Dionysius vom Aufstieg der Kreature" *Schol.* 29 (1954) 24-54.

154. "Geeinte Vielheit", 391-394 and "Ausstrahlende Licht", 482 and 491.

155. "Ausstrahlende Licht", 493, and "Aufstieg", 39-41.

156. "Θεολογία συμβολική" 5-7 and 8-10.

157. "Erlösung und Erlöser", 372-373.

158. "Überwesentliche Einheit", 213.

159. "Erlösung und Erlöser" 374-375 — although with some qualification: *Ibid.* 379.

160. "Überwesentliche Einheit", 213-214.

161. "Dionysios", 147-214 in *Herrlichkeit: eine theologische Aesthetik*, Vol. 11 (1962).

162. *Ibid.* 189-191.

163. I am very grateful to the Rev. Andrew Louth late of Worcester College, Oxford, both for directing me to von Balthasar's study of Dionysius, and for lending me his own, manuscript translation of the essay, since published in his translation of Balthasar's magnum opus.

throughout the existing corpus¹⁶⁴. He sees and argues for them as contributing elements to an overall Christian vision within which they would occupy an essential place¹⁶⁵. We would point here, with von Balthasar, particularly to the *Theological Outlines* as filling out both the Dionysian trinity and the Incarnation whose details are, admittedly, only sketchily present in the *DN*, to *On Divine Judgement* as rendering more specific the critique of the Origenist-Evagrian system to which we attach great importance for the formation of the Dionysian system, and perhaps most vital, to the treatise *On the Soul* as providing the essential, individual complement to the "sociological" vision of the *EH*, the "missing link" as it were between the *EH* and *MT* which we understand as presupposed in the treatise devoted to "our hierarchy". Dionysius' vision of the Church mirrored in the soul and the soul reflected in the Church, both the "place" of encounter with God in Christ, is indeed central to our presentation of his thought.

We conclude our review of the literature with Andrew Louth's *Denys the Areopagite*¹⁶⁶. Louth has the great advantage, in our view, of a lifelong immersion in the patristic writers. His acquaintance with von Balthasar, as one of the latter's English translators, was doubtless also of assistance. He is able thus to point out that Christian and pagan Neoplatonists shared a generally common universe of discourse, an intellectual "culture", while still preserving certain real distinctions in their use of this common language¹⁶⁷. He seeks to lay out the world of the late fifth century, pagan and Christian, before embarking on his analysis¹⁶⁸, and thereafter consistently draws the reader's attention to Dionysius' debts to both his pagan and Christian contributors. Thus, for example, while the Neoplatonists receive their due in Louth's discussion of the *DN*, so do the Cappadocians and even Ephrem of Syria¹⁶⁹. The Syrians are cited again for possible influence on the *EH*'s portrait of the monk, or his interest in the sacred oil, *myron*, and Louth is

164. Those treatises, in order of appearance, are: *Περὶ τῶν θεῶν ὕμνων* 212B (31:24); *Ἡ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία* 336A (56:1), 597B (121:3), 700D (149:9), 984A (231:8), 1033A (146:11), 1104B (193:5), and 1113B (207:4); *Περὶ τῶν νοητῶν καὶ αἰσθητῶν* 373B (65:18) and 397C (74:8); *Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις* 585B (107:3) 636C (122:11), 648A-649B (133:14, 134:6), 953B (221:11), and 1032D-1033A (146:1); *Περὶ ψυχῆς* 696C (145:17); *Hierotheos' Ἑρωτικοὶ ὕμνοι* 713A (160:15); and *Περὶ δικαίου καὶ θεοῦ δικαστηρίου* 736B (179:19). Concerning the *Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις*, the references 636C (145:17) and 648A-648B (133:14, 134:6) are to a work of the same name by Hierotheos.

165. *Herrlichkeit*, 157-166.

166. *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton CT: 1989). See also his other works devoted in whole or in part to Dionysius: *The Origins of Christian Mysticism: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: 1981); "The Influence of Denys the Areopagite on Eastern and Western Spirituality in the XIVth Century" *Sobornost* (1982) 185-200; and "Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism in Denys the Areopagite" *JTS* 37 (1986) 432-438.

167. *Denys*, 20-24.

168. *Ibid.* 1-14.

169. *Ibid.* 78-98.

the only writer we know of even to raise the question of the *Macarian Homilies in connection with the Areopagite*¹⁷⁰. His analysis of the Dionysian "trajectory" in the East is also largely on target – i.e., much the way we read it as well¹⁷¹. For this corroboration, as with von Balthasar, we are deeply grateful. The nature of Louth's book, however, as a work of introduction and addressed to an audience wider than academicians and other specialists, invites the more exacting analysis of a scholarly monograph. We are grateful for his leads, though, and hope to develop some of them in what follows.

C. METHOD AND OUTLINE

We have divided our argument into two parts. The first, and larger, comprises the first four chapters and seeks to present Dionysius' thought as a coherent vision centered upon the Incarnation. The second, our fifth chapter, examines his source in patristic literature. We hope the foregoing review of the question to have revealed at once the complexity and the mutual dependence of these two halves. While we recognize that it is an unusual, even awkward, method to approach the system apart from and prior to what we understand to be its primary sources, we nonetheless believe that Dionysius' thought, together with the nature of the debate concerning him, required us first to present the *CD* as a whole, to uncover its shape, before going on to relate it in whole and in part to those Christian thinkers who were both its sources and, in the case of Origen and especially Evagrius, its targets. The two halves then must be understood as continually supporting and referring to one another, and for that reason we have tried to indicate their interdependence by means of frequent cross-referencing. The first half, however, the shape of the *CD*, remains primary.

Concerning our account of that shape, it should be noted that ours is not an attempt either to emulate the fine detail of others' work, such as Roques' splendid study, or to explore in depth any single aspect of Dionysius' rich and difficult thought. This essay's primary argument, that of the Areopagite's fundamental continuity with patristic tradition, has necessitated a more general approach which, while concentrating on the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* as the core and pivot of the whole system, would also allow for a reply to those questions scholars have raised chiefly with regard to the other treatises, especially the *DN* and *MT*. Such is the unity of Dionysius' thought that any one aspect necessarily includes the rest, and certainly the points raised by Hornus, Brons, Vanneste *et. al.* bearing on monism, mysticism, the *vonótá* and generally the whole Christian versus Platonist debate are not irrelevant either to the hierarchies or to the question of their

170. *Ibid.* 69-70 for monks, 63-64 for the *myron*, and 100 for Macarius.

171. *Ibid.* 111-120 though we do take exception to his analysis of Dionysius in relation to Symeon New Theologian and Nicetas Stethatos in 117-120. See in contrast A. G. Golitzin, "Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition" *SVTQ* 38,2 (1994) 131-179.

patristic antecedents. We shall thus limit our remarks to the most prominent landmarks, as it were, of the Dionysian vision rather than trying to draw a comprehensive and detailed map of his theology. The Neoplatonists in particular do not receive as much attention as some will feel they should. Here we may perhaps be faulted, but so great is the volume of literature already devoted to their presence in the *CD*, and so little do we have to add to it, that we felt we might be excused devoting much of our limited space to them. We do, however, refer to them and to relevant studies when touching on the central issues: Dionysius' use and transformation of the *μονή-πρόοδος-ἐπιστροφή* cycle and the related theme of microcosm/macrocosm, monism, the *νοητά*, and theurgy.

The thesis opens with a review of the *MT* and *DN*, and covers the Dionysian apophaticism, trinity, and the essence/energies distinction underlying the treatment of the divine names. In Chapter II we move to consider the reason-endowed creatures, angels and humans, as each a reflection or icon of the divine energies and the capacity of each for union with God. With Chapters III and IV we arrive at, first, a discussion of "hierarchy" in general as the reflection on a given plane of being (intelligible: the *CH*, and the sensible: the *EH*) of the activity of God *ad extra* and, secondly, to a focus on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as the *locus* of the human encounter with God through his Incarnation in Christ. We shall in Chapter IV also endeavor to draw the connection or parallel between the human soul and the structures of grace embodied in the Church as, truly, the "body" of Christ, a single divine-human organism. The first three chapters thus see us at once moving outward: from the core of the hidden divinity to the energies, to the reason-endowed beings, and finally to the world as intended by God, hierarchy, and, at the same time, inward: from God the unutterably distant, to the "extension" of the divine energies, to the world, to humans, and finally to the core of the human soul, the point of contact between humanity and God. In Chapter IV we also attempt to show the simultaneous presence of all the circles in our world and ourselves. Moreover, we propose to show that this "centering" is a function of the Incarnation: Jesus as God in the flesh is at once the unfathomable mystery of the divine darkness at the infinite center and the power both embracing and irradiating the walls of the world about us, his flesh, the Church. This in turn, we argue, supports our contention that the Church as a "body", a single whole, both images forth and enables the individual soul in achieving its divinely-intended vocation: to reflect, so far as possible, the presence and activity of God, to become a mirror through participation of the divine and aboriginal light.

The latter we understand as essential to Dionysius' transformation of both the pagan images of macro-microcosm and the Origenist-Evagrian vision of the whole visible cosmos as the (temporary) vehicle of salvation which at once reveals the *voûs*-demiurge, Christ, and mirrors the structures of the fallen soul. This is indeed the heart of Chapters V through IX where we move to the account of Dionysius' antecedents in Scripture and the apostolic Fathers, Philo, Clement, Origen, the Cappadocians, Evagrius, the fourth-century mystagogues, and certain of the Syrian Fathers, and endeavor thus to reveal the constituent elements in the Tradition from which we believe he took to build his system.

In our Concluding Remarks we argue that the *CD* is first of all a coherent and unified structure, and secondly that, as such, it evidences both a striking originality and a remarkable fidelity, the latter not applying primarily to the pagans, from whom Dionysius did indeed borrow, but to the already long-established currents in Greek Christian speculation – and meditation – on the mystery of God in Christ from which we insist the Areopagite took first of all. His originality derives from a re-combination of those elements which, set in the frame of the Antiochene mystagogy and ascetic (especially Syrian-inspired) appropriation, effected a synthesis whose power continues to influence – indeed, to shape – the Orthodox East to this day.

PART I: THE *CORPUS DIONYSIACUM*

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF GOD: TRANSCENDENCE AND PRESENCE

Dionysius' treatises on the *Mystical Theology* and the *Divine Names*, the latter providing the basis of the following discussion, are the least original works of his corpus. While this statement will come as no surprise to those for whom the two treatises represent little other than thinly-veiled Neoplatonist metaphysics, we contend that the Areopagite's want of originality here derives less from his imitation of the pagan masters than from his fidelity to patristic teaching on the Trinity and the divine names or attributes. As we show in Chapters V, VI, VII below, that teaching stresses with respect to the Trinity, first, that It is a revealed mystery. God is known as both Three and One, yet how he is so remains forever hidden. Thus, secondly, the nature of each divine person and of their unity is utterly irreducible to any of the schemes or analogs derived from human thought and ways of being. Regarding the "names" of God we distinguish the following points: 1) apophatic or negative theology, what we cannot know of God, is always the preferred approach while 2) positive or cataphatic theology, statements about God, can only point to the, as it were, "periphery" of God's being. Therefore, 3) the names themselves refer rather to the activities or powers of God in creation than to his forever-secret inner life, his essence. In spite, then, of being human constructs, 4) the "names" can still, as *given* through either Scriptural revelation or the "natural" revelation of the Creator in his creation (e.g. Rom 1:19-20), carry or impart some communication of the divine. In short, as "notional icons", they bear a certain sacramental power, and participate in the mystery of God's revelation in Christ.

This patristic, primarily Cappadocian (though not entirely, as our research into Ephrem shows below) teaching is at the heart of the *DN*. It is furthermore the key to that treatise's parallels with, particularly, the late Neoplatonists' commentaries on Plato's *Parmenides* – parallels which, as we noted above, have been so ably documented by Corsini. We do not intend to repeat the latter's work, but will instead confine ourselves here to noting how the *DN* corresponds to the points just outlined. In so doing we hope to show that the *DN* represents at once a real break from the thought of the late Neoplatonists and their understanding of the *vontó*, and the exploitation of those elements in their vision which were most

open to development by a Christian thinker. As a full discussion of the *DN/MT* texts is impossible in the space we have allotted it, we shall concentrate on the central chapter, *DN II*, and on certain aspects of the discussion flowing from it as vital not only to the *DN*, but, bearing as the latter does on the notion of the divine powers, to Dionysius' whole understanding of our participation in God. Let us open the discussion by turning first to his understanding of that mystery as it exists for and in itself.

A. RECIPROCAL ECSTASIES: A PREFACE

In his very short treatise on the *Mystical Theology* Dionysius concludes discussion of the apophatic way with the following, sweeping series of negations:

[The divine] is neither soul nor mind; neither has it imagination, nor opinion, nor reason, nor intuition, neither is it reason nor intuition, nor can it be reasoned or intuited... it is neither life nor does it live; neither is it essence, nor eternity, nor time... it is neither one nor oneness, nor deity, nor goodness. It is not spirit, as we know it, nor is it sonship, nor fatherhood... it is no one of the things which are not, nor is it any of those which are... beyond all affirmation... and beyond negation is the transcendence of him who, simply, is free of all things and beyond them all¹.

There is then evidently very little indeed that one can say when attempting to speak of the deity as it is in itself. Dionysius takes this point up specifically, and notes that all such discussion has silence, a cessation of both discourse and of intuition, as its final outcome: "and entering now into the darkness beyond mind [we find] not brevity of speech but a total want of speech and thought"². At the terminus of the ascent one is to become "wholly speechless" in order "to be united to the unutterable"³. The deity as it is in itself remains wholly outside the realm of discourse – and of everything. It is wholly unknowable, ineffable, incommunicable. It is other. God may be "known", as it were, through an act of "unknowing" alone: "to see and to know through unseeing and unknowing... through the negation of all things known and seen"⁴. Our sole access to the "darkness of the secret silence"⁵ lies through an act of ecstasy. The creature approaches the "super-

1. "... Ούτε ψυχή ἐστὶν οὔτε νοῦς; οὔτε φαντασίαν ἢ δόξαν ἢ λόγον ἢ νόησιν ἔχει, οὔτε νόησις, οὔτε λέγεται οὔτε νοεῖται... οὔτε ζῆ, οὔτε ζωὴ ἐστὶν, οὔτε οὐσία ἐστὶν οὔτε αἰὼν οὔτε χρόνος... οὔτε ἐν οὔτε ἐνότης, οὔτε θεότης ἢ ἀγαθότης, οὐδὲ πνεῦμά ἐστιν, ὥς ἡμᾶς εἰδέναι, οὔτε νιότης οὔτε πατρότης... οὐδέ τι τῶν οὐκ ὄντων, οὐδέ τι τῶν ὄντων... ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀφαίρεσιν ἢ ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ πάντων ἀπολελυμένου καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὅλων" *MT V 1045D-1048B (149:1-150:9)*.

2. *MT III 1033BC (147:8-10)*.

3. *Ibid.* 1033C (147:11).

4. *MT II 1025A (145:2-5)*.

5. *MT II 1.1 997B (142:2)*.

essential ray of divine darkness" by means of "the complete and pure departure from itself and from all things"⁶. It is an out-going from self, a departure from the state of creaturely being, πάντα ἀφελῶν, in accordance with the demands of "a union [ἔνωσις] which exceeds the creaturely powers of intellect and intuition"⁷. God dwelling in unapproachable light permits us no other mode of approach.

While we shall return in the chapter following to the *MT*, we should like at this point to indicate that there is little that is new with respect either to patristic writings⁸, or to the late Neoplatonists⁹, in the passages just cited. Dionysius is here surely touching on a point where Christian and Neoplatonist converge. The latter, too, require an ἔκστασις or "out-passing" of the mind in order to approach the transcendent divinity¹⁰. Their stress on divine transcendence is also both consistent and unequivocal¹¹ – so much so in fact that it is difficult, at best, to see in them any thorough-going monism¹². The Neoplatonist philosophers insist on apophasis¹³ and so on the vast chasm between the ineffable One and everything else. So great, indeed, did they see that gulf that their greatest difficulty lay in explaining just how the rest of existence, the realm of being, comes to be at all. Thus we find in Plotinus that the descent of the second Hypostasis, Νοῦς, is occasionally spoken of in terms reminiscent of nothing so much as original sin¹⁴.

Dionysius' insistence on the divine transcendence raises the problem of God's immanence. If divinity *in se* is utterly removed from the sphere of creaturely being, what then is or can be the nature of God's relation to the creation? Indeed, how is it that creation comes to be at all? Further, assuming that there is a relationship between Creator and created, how, and employing which modes, is the divine and super-essential reflected in created essences in such a manner that it can and does become accessible, in a finite way, to the limited capacities of creaturely knowing? For while the *MT* does insist ultimately upon the creature's ἔκστασις, it nonetheless presupposes an ascent through degrees of

6. "τῇ γὰρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ πάντων ἀσχέτῳ καὶ ἀπολύτῳ καθαρῶς ἔκστασει" *Ibid.* 997B-1000A (142:9-10).

7. *DN* 1.1 585B-588A (108:3-5).

8. See our discussion of, particularly, Clement of Alexandria and the Cappadocians, Chapters VI and VII below, 261-262 and 314-316 respectively. See esp. Gregory of Nyssa on the darkness and silence, 292, notes 57 and 58.

9. See Koch, *Beziehungen*, 123-134 and 147-174.

10. See, for example, Plotinus, *Enneads* III.8.9-10 and VI.7.34-36; as well as Proclus, *In Tim.* I.212 (cited by Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 319).

11. See Plotinus, *Enn.* I.7.1 (citing Plato's *Republic* 509B); Iamblichus, *de Mysteriis* (ed. des Places) 1.5 (see also Dillon *Iamblichi in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* [1973], 29-33); and for Proclus: Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 343-348.

12. Such as is maintained by Bruns, *Gott u.S.*, 229-236.

13. See, for example, Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 37. For a study of apophatic or negative theology, see esp. R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence* II (1986), in particular 97-127 for Proclus and Damascius, and 221-241 for Dionysius himself.

14. For the descent of Νοῦς from the One as τόλμα, see *Enn.* VI.5.13; VI.7.9; and, relatedly, VI.8.5.

knowing prior to the final leap into ἀγνοσία¹⁵. What, then, is the shape of the process, the παιδεία, proper to the creature both by essence and, as we shall see, by grace? What, particularly, is the nature of the corresponding condescension of the deity that enables the creature's ascent?

It is here that we approach one of Dionysius' fundamental, and Christian-inspired, adjustments of pagan thought. The key lies in the term ἔκστασις itself. If the created mind encountering divinity in the transcendent darkness proper to the latter is no longer creature *qua* creature ἐν ἑκστάσει, deity in commerce with creation is no longer divinity *in se* but God outside of Himself. Dionysius' ἑκστάσεις are reciprocal¹⁶. In reference to God the word is used twice, once in adjectival form and once as a participle. Describing the process whereby the divine is brought into relation with creation, Dionysius declares that the Godhead "descends to immanence by means of an ecstatic and super-essential power while remaining within itself"¹⁷. The second usage of the term, ἐξεστηκώς, refers rather to God's transcendence than to his immanence¹⁸. Finally, however, Dionysius uses a related term, ἔκβασις, to describe the action whereby God creates: "He brings essences into being by means of an out-going from essence"¹⁹.

We do not think Gersh justified in reading this application of ἑκστασις to God as an "unqualified emanation metaphor" highly suggestive of "automatism"²⁰. The metaphor seems to us considerably removed from the impersonal note he finds elsewhere in the pagans²¹. Neither, for that matter, can we find any of the philosophers using ἑκστασις to describe *God's* action²². The lower levels of being may move *up* to union with transcendence via an "out-passing", but a downward ecstasy is nowhere stated. While the metaphor is certainly a bold one, it appears to us that Dionysius is using it in order to accentuate at once the gap between God and creation, and the former's own, personal action in moving to create – it is, after all persons and not "things" who are the subjects of ecstasies.

We arrive then at the following, fundamental equation of Dionysian thought: if the creature may only encounter God as the latter is in his transcendence through "passing out" of its proper being, then conversely God may enter into relationship, including the act of creation, only through a kind of "self-transcendence". Moved to create – and we shall see below that he is so moved because he desires it – God "leaves" in a sense the state of being, or "super-being", proper

15. See the account of Moses' ascent, *MT* I.3 1000C-1001A (143-144).

16. See Roques' remarks on the divine love, ἔρως and ἀγάπη, in his "Introduction" to the *Hierarchie Céleste* (SC 58) xliii-xliv; and his article, "Symbolisme et théologie négative chez le Ps.-Denys" *BAGB* 1 (1957) esp. 12.

17. "κατ' ἑκστατικὴν ὑπεροὺσιον δύναμιν", *DN* IV.12 712B (159:13-14).

18. *Ep.* IX.5 1112C (205:5).

19. "κατὰ τὴν ἀπὸ οὐσίας ἑκβάσιν" *DN* V.8 824C (188:6).

20. Iamb. to Eriug., 20.

21. *Ibid.* 17-26.

22. See Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 212, 319 and 379 for ἑκστασις in Proclus.

to him. He goes "outside" his hidden essence, ἔξω ἑαυτοῦ γίνεται²³. It is this divine "out-passing" that is the foundation or subject of the *DN* and, in so far as they are the mirrors of God, of the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies as well. God as he is known in his names and in his creation is God "outside", as it were, of his essence.

B. THE ONE AND THE MANY IN GOD: THE DIVINE ΔΙΑΚΡΙΣΕΙΣ.

In the second chapter of the *DN* Dionysius draws the distinction that we, following Lossky²⁴, understand as crucial to his system. As he tells us himself, his discussion here of the divine διακρίσεις establishes the context of the whole treatise following: ὅπως ἂν ἡμῖν εὐσύνοπτος ὁ πᾶς ἐγένηται λόγος²⁵. That discussion has as its aim at once the maintenance of the patristic doctrine of God in trinity and in his energies, and therewith a radical readjustment of the Neoplatonist philosophers' teaching concerning the One and the intelligible world²⁶.

Let us first ask after the nature of the problem Dionysius confronted in the Neoplatonists and those aspects of their system that he may have felt capable of exploiting in accordance with an already established Christian theology. We have already mentioned the crucial one: that ambiguity or gap between the ineffable One and the Many, with the latter including the realm of the intelligibles, the νοητά. Thus, for example, in Plotinus the One is above thought, not equivalent even to the intelligible one of mathematics²⁷. Indeed, the "One" and "Good" are only names²⁸, pointers to a transcendent reality. The One is above all free of our distinctions²⁹. It is other³⁰, and infinite³¹. The same sentiments may be found

23. *DN* IV.13 712B (159:11).

24. See esp. his articles, "Théologie Négative", "Apophysis and Trinitarian Theology", and "Darkness and Light in the Knowledge of God".

25. *DN* II.4 640B (126:4-5).

26. *Il tratto*, 140ff. Here we take issue particularly with Corsini, Gersh and Brons. The first, in spite of his close analysis of the texts, misses the point of the *DN* in reading the νοητά as existing entities, the created principles of the world. Gersh, on the other hand, denies the distinction between essence and powers entirely, 166-167, note 184. He thus finishes struggling to see the difference between the Persons of the Trinity and the intelligible names, 187, note 269. This line of argument somewhat resembles the approach taken up and repeatedly stressed by Brons. The latter states flatly that the *DN* represents indeed the destruction of Proclus' "metaphysisch-architektonische Kuntswerk", but only at the cost of leaving in its wake chaotic plurality within a Godhead whose unique claim to unity lies in its being "cause [αἰτία]" of all things, 165-166. Gersh's remark reveals the source of each of these scholars' difficulties: the "distinction... made between God's essence and God's energies... [was] explicitly rejected by the Athenian school of Neoplatonism which is Pseudo-Dionysius' source", 166-167, note 184. The false assumption is that Proclus and his predecessors provided Dionysius with, effectively, his unique source.

27. *Enn.* VI.9.5.

28. *Enn.* V.5.6.

29. *Enn.* VI.9.4.

30. *Enn.* V.5.6.

31. *Enn.* V.8.9. See Armstrong, "Plotinus' Doctrine of the Infinite and Christian

echoed in both Iamblichus³² and Proclus³³. As Armstrong has noted, this transcendent freedom from concepts and numerical reckoning opens, for a Christian theologian, the Neoplatonist "One" to a possible Trinitarian reading³⁴. Following the lead of J. Trouillard³⁵, Armstrong draws another interesting conclusion from the One's transcendence and its lack of a real connection with the hierarchy of intelligibility: "It seems to me that this [apophatic] side of Plotinus' thought... must lead in the end... to nothing less than the abolition of the *kosmos noetos*... to the denial of an eternal, unchanging intelligible reality"³⁶. Once this consequence is accepted, he continues, one is free to move from the worship, as idols, of the intelligibles to their veneration as icons³⁷. These are exactly the outlines of Dionysius' response. On the one hand, he was not bound as a Christian either to the traditional intellectualism of Greek thought, or to the essentially religious conservatism that together constrained the later philosophers to include, as a kind of reflex, both Plato's Ideas and Aristotle's *Nous* in their accounts of reality³⁸. Neither was he under their compulsion to make his own that intellectual portrait of a perfectly continuous spectrum, of a descent "without leaps"³⁹ which characterized their own attempts – whether in the form of Plotinus' broad sweep or the more "cinematic"⁴⁰ approach, featuring a marvelously complex and heavily-populated intelligible universe of interlocking triads⁴¹, taken up by the latter's successors in order to fill the spaces left between his three primary Hypostases⁴². Quite to the contrary, Dionysius was free to abandon their elaborate machinery of emanation while exploiting the opportunity that Armstrong has indicated was present in their doctrine of transcendence. On the other hand, their religious tone, a corollary of the insistence on transcendence – as well as a sign of the times⁴³ – and their stress on communion with the divine⁴⁴

Thought" *DRev* 73 (1954-1955) 47-58. See also the article by S. Lilla, "The Notion of Infinity in Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita" *JTS* 31 (1980) 93-103; esp. 101-102 for Dionysius' use of "infinity" as taken not from Plotinus and later Neoplatonists, but from Gregory of Nyssa.

32. See Dillon, *Iamblichus*, 32, and *de Myst.* VII.2 (des Places) 195-196.

33. See *Théologie Platonicienne* (ed. Saffrey/Westerink) II.1-6, 1-43.

34. "The Escape of the One: An Investigation of some Possibilities of Apophatic Theology Imperfectly Realized in the West" *TU* 116 (1971) 77-87.

35. "Raison et Mystique chez Plotin" *REA* 20 (1974) 3-14.

36. "Escape from the One", 84.

37. *Ibid.* 88-89; see also his "Negative Theology" *DRev* 95 (1976) 188-189.

38. See the articles by Armstrong and A. C. Lloyd in *CambHist*, esp. 212-214, 236-237, 275-282, and 320-321.

39. Lloyd, *Ibid.* 281-282.

40. Both the contrast and the phrase are Gersh's, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 120-121.

41. See E. R. Dodds, *Elements of Theology* (1963) xxvi-xxxiii; also, for Iamblichus, Dillon, *Iamblichus*, 33-38; and for detail on Proclus, Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 48-164.

42. For reasons why Plotinus' simple triad failed to satisfy his successors, see Armstrong's "Eternity, Life, and Movement in Plotinus' Accounts of *Nous*", *Le Néoplatonisme* (1971) 67-74.

43. See Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (1965) 70-100.

44. *Ibid.*

must certainly have appeared to our author as points of potential convergence which he, already equipped with the patristic theology of divine transcendence and immanence, was able fully to exploit. Here then is the foundation of the *DN*: God is transcendent as both One and Three, yet is fully immanent to creation in his powers whose presence we may discern in the notional icons of his names given in revelation.

1. God *in se*; the One and the Three

Dionysius stresses in *DN* II.1.⁴⁵ that the names of God belong indivisibly (οὐ μερικῶς) to the Godhead. He goes on, however, to insist that there is nonetheless no confusion (σύγχυσις) of distinctions within God. Scripture, he declares, “delivers some things in a unified fashion [ἡνωμένως] and some in a differentiated manner [διακεκριμένως], and it is neither lawful to divide the unified nor to confuse the differentiated”⁴⁶. There is then a certain real plurality in God’s own mode of being. As the first and truly primary example of this plurality he points of course to the Trinity. While those ἡνωμένα such as the ὑπεράγαθον, ὑπερούσιον, and so forth, whence are derived the “Good”, “Being”, etc. which we receive as gifts of God, must be predicated of the whole divinity (τῆς ὅλης θεότητος), the διακεκριμένως of the three divine persons are no less proper to God as he is in himself⁴⁷. Unity and difference are simultaneous and intrinsic to the very esse of divinity. Dionysius illustrates this antinomy of the Many subsisting in the deeps of the One, the Trinity, with the image of a house having many lamps that project a single light, “united in difference and distinguished in unity”⁴⁸.

While this has the appearance of Trinitarian orthodoxy, there are many who contend it is appearance alone. Vanneste, for example, argues that Dionysius’ Three are irrelevant to, and finally disappear into, his transcendent One⁴⁹. He is echoed in Brons’ assertion that the “more general” is the more real for Dionysius⁵⁰, although the German writer also adopts a slightly different line in seeing the difference between the powers *ad extra* and the Persons as purely a “verbal” one⁵¹. We noted in the Introduction that the Latin Christian criteria for Trinitarian theology are not altogether applicable to Dionysius⁵². Yet it is also

45. *DN* II.1 636C (122:7).

46. *DN* II.2 640A (125:6-7).

47. *DN* II.3 640C (125:19-21).

48. *DN* II.4 641AB (127:5-7).

49. *Mystère*, 18-19, 28-29, and 149-150; see also von Semmelroth, “Überwesentliche Einheit”, 213.

50. Gott u.S., 109.

51. *Ibid.*, 88.

52. We might add that Brons’ desire to see Dionysius use the Neoplatonists’ intelligible triad, οὐσία - ζωὴ - νοῦς, after the manner of Augustine (*Ibid.* 36) precisely misses the point which we maintain Dionysius saw in the philosophers’ transcendence doctrine and which, in accord with prior tradition (see below, Chapter VII), he felt free to exploit. Brons is perhaps also reflecting Beierwaltes’ approval of Meister Eckhardt’s vision of “die Entfaltung der

undeniable that certain texts might appear to indicate a primary emphasis on the divine unity. In *DN XIII* he asserts that the name of the One is to be considered as the highest or most important (καταερώτατον) of the divine titles⁵³. More troubling still, he tells us at the end of *DN II* that αἱ ἐνώσεις τῶν διακρίσεων ἐπικρατοῦσι καὶ προκατάρχουσι⁵⁴. If the Persons of the Trinity are to be identified exclusively with the “differences”, then the Neoplatonist One does prevail.

Such is not the case, however. Corsini has himself shown that this simple identification is impossible⁵⁵. One may point first to Chapter II’s very beginning:⁵⁶ Dionysius follows his declaration that the ἡνωμένα must be predicated indivisibly of the whole Godhead by listing a series of examples, “good”, “being”, “life”, “lordship”, and then goes on to apply these attributes to the divine Persons severally. Again, below⁵⁷, we find the same repeated: “whatever is proper to the divine unity or super essentiality is united to the Trinity which is source of unity [τῇ ἐναρχικῇ Τριάδι]”. This list includes “ἡ ὑπὲρ ἐναρχίαν ἐνότης, τὸ ἀφθεγκτον, τὸ πολύφωνον, ἡ ἀγνώσις, τὸ παννόητον... τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶσιν καὶ θέσιν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν”. Finally we may point to the statement that “these [i.e., the Persons] are the unities [ἐνώσεις] and differences [διακρίσεις] according to the [divine] ineffable union and existence”⁵⁸. Thus all of the divine unities and differences, the latter referring to the processions, belong to each of the persons⁵⁹ – the sole exception being of course the Incarnation⁶⁰ with which Father and Spirit communicated only through the consent of the common divine will⁶¹. The “whole divinity”, in other words, belongs to each.

If each person is a unity, each is also the One. The same Chapter XIII which exalts the latter name immediately adds: “and One [εἷς] God is the Father, and One [εἷς] Lord Jesus Christ, and One [εἷς] and the same Spirit”⁶². The divine “arithmetic” is thus thrice one equals one, and it is surely with that in mind that

trinitarischen Rationalität... die Selbstidentität seines [Gottes] Seins und Denkens” – i.e., a triumph of cataphatic theology — as opposed to Proclus’ “impersonal” ἀπόφασις (see *Proklos*, “Exkurs IV”, 397-398). The identification of the Trinity with, effectively, the Neoplatonists’ Νοῦς would have been anathema for Dionysius, as indeed it was for his predecessors (see below, Chapter VII, 287-289 and 297ff).

53. *DN XIII.1* 977B (226:6-7); see also *XIII.3* 980A-D (228-229).

54. *DN II.11* 652A (157:5-6).

55. *Il tratto*, 39ff.

56. *DN II.1* 636C-637C (122-124).

57. *DN II.4* 641A (126:14-127:2).

58. *DN II.1* 641D (128:14-15).

59. *DN II.1* 637C (124:4-11).

60. *DN II.3* 640C (125:21-126:2) and *II.6* 644C (130:8-9), and note 48 above.

61. *DN II.6* 644C (130:8-9).

62. *DN XIII.3* 980B (228:8-9).

Dionysius concludes: "divinity above all things, hymned as monad and as triad, is neither any monad nor triad [οὐδὲ μονὰς οὐδὲ τριάς] of the sort known to us"⁶³. God above gods is ultimately unknowable in terms of number (ἀριθμὸς) or unity (ἐνότης) or any other way of reckoning, and we must therefore confess our ignorance at the last and admit with Scripture the superior propriety of ἀπόφασις in confronting the revelation of the unknowable God⁶⁴.

Each of the Three is unity and each the One, yet, although each is identical to the others⁶⁵, there is no exchange (ἀντιστροφὴ) among them of personal identity⁶⁶. Each is therefore absolute. Here we appear to be at the opposite extreme from a resolution of the three into the One. Rather than teaching the priority of unity, we must ask instead how Dionysius avoids tritheism.

He does so through the use of four arguments familiar from the fourth century⁶⁷. The first is his articulation of Trinitarian περιχώρησις⁶⁸. Each of the Three abides in the others: ἡ ἐν ἀλλήλοις τῶν ἐναρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων. Dionysius argues secondly from the unity of the divine activity⁶⁹. The same list we cited above as comprising DN II.1 concludes with: "as much as is said of the Father and of Him [i.e. the Son] also applies commonly [κοινωνικῶς] and unitedly to the divine Spirit"⁷⁰. None of the attributes or functions – save, again, the Incarnation – ascribed to God can be referred to any one of the Three as distinct from the others. The divine πρόοδος, or δύναμις, or ἐνέργεια, or πρόνοια is ultimately one and the same⁷¹, and the "whole divinity" refers thus to the united and indivisible activity of the Three. Thirdly, the Father is the "unique source" [μόνη δὲ πηγὴ] of the super-essential divinity⁷². His is the monarchy of origins and he

63. *Ibid.* 980D (229:6-8).

64. *Ibid.* 981AB (229:10-230:5).

65. DN II.4 641A (126:14-127:4).

66. DN II.3 640C (125:20) and II.5 641D (128:11).

67. See Chapter VII below, 297-302.

68. DN II.4 641A (127:2-3), and repeated in MT III 1033A (146:4-7). See the perceptive article by V. Harrison, "Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers" *SVTQ* 35,1 (1991) 53-65.

69. See Chapter VII below on Gregory of Nyssa's *On why there are not three Gods*, 269-271. This was one of the keys both to the Cappadocians' defense of the Trinity as one, and to their refutation of "polytheism" which was, at least potentially, inherent in Origen's division of functions within the Trinity — thus see Chapters VI below on both Origen (270-273) and VII on Basil (289-290). We also note that this is a point of Greek triadology which Bruns seems completely to miss (*Gott u.S.*, 101, 108-109, and 122-125). It serves, finally, to explain why Dionysius is free to use "Providence", "Spirit", "Jesus", "Thearchy" etc. in identical contexts: the action of God is proper to each person and all.

70. DN II.1 637C (124:6-7).

71. For the unity of the πρόοδος, see for example DN II.5 641D (128:15); for δύναμις, VIII.3 892B (201:17-21); for ἐνέργεια, IX.5 912D (210:9); and for πρόνοια, CH IX.4 261B-D (39:1-24).

72. DN II.5 641D (128:11); see also II.7 645B (132:1).

alone is θεόγονος⁷³. His relation of origin to the other co-eternal Persons serves simultaneously as the uniquely revealed mode of distinction among them⁷⁴. Lastly, there is the appeal to ἀπόφασις we noted concluding *DN* XIII. The modes of divine union and distinction in the hidden life of God are forever unknowable. They escape all categories. Number no longer applies and the very names themselves of the divine persons, taken from our human ways of being, can do no more than to direct us to the mystery of the tri-unity⁷⁵. Like the Incarnation itself, whence we know of the Trinity, the latter is an irreducible given, revealer of its providence to us⁷⁶, but itself in itself ever mysterious.

In reply to the questions posed concerning the Dionysian trinity, we may thus list the following: 1) the Three are severally and together, inseparably and unconfusedly, the “whole divinity;” 2) each is the One; 3) each is not the other; 4) they are together One through their coinherence; 5) their single origin from the Father; 6) their united and single activity; and 7) their unity beyond thought and number. There can be no doubt that these points constitute a fully orthodox triadology according to the criteria of the Cappadocians⁷⁷. It must, equally, be admitted that Dionysius’ is a very brief account of the Trinity, little more than a bare outline. In his defense, though, we stress that it is an outline fully capable of expansion, that the Three are not the declared subject of the *DN*, and furthermore, that he does promise a fuller treatment in the *Outlines of Divinity*⁷⁸. There appears to us to be no compelling reason to dismiss the latter as a fraud⁷⁹, and we believe it wisest to accept his sketch in the *DN* as a true indication of his mind.

2. God *ad extra*: the divine Διακρίσεις and immanence

We arrive at the subject proper of the *DN*. If in the Trinity we discover the One and the Many enshrined ineffably in the (super-)essence itself of God, we are led to see the same principle of distinction applied to the opposition between God *in se* and *ad extra*. Dionysius is careful to distinguish the “differences” (and “unities”) which are the divine Hypostases from this second kind of διακρίσεις⁸⁰. “Difference” in the latter case signifies a mode of existence that is other than the

73. For the Father as θεόγονος, see *DN* II.1 637B (123:9); II.7 645B (132:2); XIII.3 981A (229:8); and *Ep*, IX.1 1104C (194:8); and as, by implication, the divine γονιμότης, see *DN* I.4 592A (113:1).

74. *DN* II.3 640C (125:19-21); II.5 641D (128:12-13); II.7 645B (132:1-3).

75. See *DN* II.7 and II.8 645A and C-D (130-132); *MT* V 1048A (150:4); and *Ep*, IX.1 1104C-1105A (194:7-195:2).

76. *DN* III.1 680B (138:2-4).

77. See again Chapter VII below, 297-302.

78. *DN* I.1 585B (107:3); II.1 636C (122:11); and *MT* III 1033A (146:9).

79. As does Vanneste, *Mystère*, 20.

80. *DN* II.5 641D (128:15); the Hypostases of the Trinity: αὐταὶ μὲν, and the distinctions which are not in the essence: δὲ καὶ θεία διακρίσεις ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγαθοπρεπὴς πρόοδος. Note the μὲν... δὲ καί.

essential. It is equivalent to the divine ἐκστάσις we discussed above: “divine difference is the beneficent procession [πρόοδος] of the divine unity multiplying itself in goodness and in a manner transcending unity”⁸¹. While he uses qualifiers such as ὑπερνωμένως in referring to this self-multiplication of God, Dionysius’ point remains clear: there is a structure in God that has a decisively real character⁸². To put it another way, it is the same God who at once abides ineffably removed in his proper transcendence and perfectly present through his own act of “self-transcendence”, his πρόοδος

a) Πρόοδος: a lesser God?

The use of this term has often been used to accuse the Areopagite of pagan philosophizing: “the principle of unity and distinctions in God... does not derive from Christian Revelation but from Neoplatonism... the unity of the being in itself and the plurality of emanation”⁸³. It is undeniable that the late Neoplatonist triad of μονή - πρόοδος - ἐπιστροφή⁸⁴ does occupy a central place in the *CD* as a whole. God’s μονή is in the transcendent Trinity⁸⁵ while his πρόοδος and ἐπιστροφή, as we shall argue, accomplish respectively the establishment and salvation of his creatures. The latter again – especially the reason-endowed – both individually and collectively mirror this double movement. While it is certainly true that this cycle is a major theme in the pagans’ philosophy as at once a theory of causation and a morphology of mind⁸⁶, i.e., of the microcosm mirroring the macrocosm⁸⁷, it is also the case that it had already undergone a considerable and progressively more transforming adaptation at the hands of Christian writers beginning particularly with Origen⁸⁸. The whole account of Dionysius’ own use of it awaits the complete unfolding of this essay. For now we must ask concerning his use of πρόοδος in relation to God.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.* 641D-644A (128); see von Semmelroth’s remarks, “Geeinte Vielheit”, 394.

83. Vanneste, *Mystère*, 38-39.

84. For a brief history of this triad in Neoplatonist thought, see Dodds, *Elements*, 220-221.

85. The only other use of this term as applied to God and in reference generally to his transcendence is in *Ep.* IX.3 1109C and D (202:13, 203:4).

86. See esp. Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 27-120, and Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 118-164. For a harsh judgment on the absurdity to which the equivalence mind/world led Proclus, see Dodds, *Elements*, xxv.

87. A key theme from the origins of Neoplatonism in Plotinus onwards. See Moreau, “L’idée de l’Univers dans la Pensée Antique” *Biblioteca del Giornale di Metafisica* 10 (1953), esp. 24, for the shift in Plotinus from the demiurgic creation model of the *Timæus* to the biological one of the Stoa: the universe as one thing. Still, for qualification, see Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (1963) 66-83. For the doctrine of thought (θεωρία) as the reality of the universe, see *Enn.* III.8.5-7.

88. See our discussion in Chapter VI below, 280-282.

Dionysius uses this term to signify the presence of God as “outside” his essence. Its use in the singular refers to the unified quality of the procession as a single out-flowing, as well as to the unity of its source. The plural usages doubtless point both to the varied effects to which the procession gives rise, and to the multiple causes (αἰτίαι) of the creatures. The expression thus generally describes the movement of the Godhead that both gives rise to the creature’s being, “the essence-creating procession to all things of the divine source of essence”⁸⁹, and also offers the creature its hope of ascent back and up to its source – its hope granted it by nature and grace. There is thus a fundamental link between πρόοδος and revelation. The “names” of God which Dionysius offers as the subject of his treatise are on several occasions specifically linked to the processions. At the end of DN II’s discussion of the διακρίσεις the author declares it his intent to “celebrate these... common and unified differences of the whole divinity, or beneficent processions, from the divine names expressing them in Scripture”⁹⁰. The Scripture, divine and unique source of true knowledge⁹¹, reveals those names of God which reflect in greater or lesser degree the divine processions. The names do not and cannot lend expression to the super-essence, to God *in se*⁹². They are instead associated, even down to a certain parallelism in Dionysius’ writing, with the other mode of divine being, the processions⁹³. While his essence remains ineffable and unknowable, God may therefore be truly known, and known truly as God, in his processions. That which permits him to be active “outside” his essence sets up the created being’s hope of knowledge of, and finally union with him. The πρόοδοι are thus finally the gifts (δωρεαί) he makes of himself⁹⁴.

The equivalence of “gift” to πρόοδος is significant not only with respect to that gracious quality of God’s out-passing to which we shall return shortly, but also for a text important to our argument concerning the nature of this procession. In DN III.1 Dionysius refers to τὰ πανάγαθα δῶρα τὰ περὶ αὐτήν [= τὴν Τριάδα] ἰδρυμένα⁹⁵. The use of περὶ with the accusative links the DN specifically with a way of discussing God’s immanence particularly developed by the Cappadocians: the divine πρόοδοι exist as a kind of radiance or “penumbra” about the transcendent essence⁹⁶. The image of the sun as a “visible [ἐμφανῆς] icon of the

89. DN V.1 816B (180:13); note also the use of the plural in IX.5 913B (211:12).

90. DN II.11 652A (137:8-10).

91. DN I.1 588A (108:6-8); although note Roques’ qualification, “Introduction”, xxv.

92. *Ibid.* Dionysius is careful to note (in V.1 816B [180:8-9]) that it is not his treatise’s object τὴν ὑπερούσιον οὐσίαν ἐκφράζειν.

93. DN V.2 816D (181:18-19), where the one God is declared source of both τὰς ὅλας ἀγαθὰς προόδους καὶ τὰς παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐξυμνουμένας θεωνυμίας. See also Lossky, “Apo-phasis”, 26.

94. DN II.5 644A (129:2).

95. DN III.1 680B (138:6).

96. See Chapter VII below, 296 and note 98.

divine goodness"⁹⁷ is thus taken up in DN IV's discussion of the name of the "Good". As the sun sheds its light, so God "sends forth the rays [ἄκτιναι] of the all-goodness to all"⁹⁸. God's light or "rays" illumine all the reason-endowed creation and conformed it thereby to its likeness; they grow into the form of the Good (ἀγαθοειδεῖς)⁹⁹ God as the Good thus takes on the name of "intelligible light [φῶς νοητόν]", or "overflowing outpouring of light [ὑπερβλύζουσα φωτοχυοία]", bringing all intelligences into, and uniting them in, "a single, true, pure, and uniform knowledge"¹⁰⁰. The terminology bearing on light ἄκτις, φωτοχυοία, μαρμαρυγή, αἴγλη etc., is consistent throughout the whole CD. When not describing an operation on the level of the creature, it should be taken as referring to God *ad extra*, to the divine πρόοδοι – as the expressions themselves would clearly seem to indicate: "ray", "effusion of light", "radiance", and so forth¹⁰¹.

The language of "rays" directs us finally to the, as it were, non-substantial character of the πρόοδοι and thus to Dionysius' fundamental – and already traditional – alteration of the pagans' emanation scheme. For the latter, πρόοδος primarily to the effect's departure from its cause¹⁰², i.e., the next level of existence down the scale of being. If such were truly Dionysius' view, then indeed we should have to speak of "lesser gods". For the DN, however, God's have no reality independent of his essence, are in no way a *Zwischenwesen*¹⁰³. Instead they refer back directly to their transcendent source. Like the sun's rays they have a certain "oblique" reality, but the viewer (or contemplator) gazing – by grace – directly up at them encounters the blinding "darkness" described in the MT. The Dionysian πρόοδοι represent in short the elimination of the pagan κόσμος νοητός. All the

97. DN IV.4 697C (147:11). This is, of course, far from an original image. See Plato, *Rep.* 506ff, and, for its subsequent use in the Neoplatonists and the importance of light imagery generally, esp. Armstrong, "Emanation in Plotinus" *Mind* XLVI (1937) 61-66.

98. DN IV.1 693B (144:5).

99. DN IV.1-2 696A (143:15) and 696B (145:7).

100. DN IV.6 701A (150:2-3).

101. We hear of the γνῶφος in MT I.3 1001A (144:10) and *Ep.* V 1073A (162:3), and in MT I.1 1000A (142:15) and *Ep.* I 1065A (156:3) of God's σκότος. Yet we note that *Ep.* V defines the γνῶφος as God's ἀπρόσιτον φῶς. Thus in the MT we find the darkness referred to as a "ray": τὴν ὑπερούσιον τοῦ θεοῦ σκότους ἄκτινα, and again in MT II 1025A (145:1) as a "super-abundance of light [ὑπέρφωτος γνῶφος]". The way of negation does not then lead to an absence, but rather to the sense of an overwhelming presence. We would also connect the "ray" language here with the divine energies pointing us to their source. Dionysius does not speak of a vision of the essence — see Lossky, "Théologie négative", 219. See also the article by H.-C. Puech, "La ténèbre mystique chez le pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite", in *En quête de la gnose* Vol. I (1978) 119-141, esp. 120-129, vs. an over-emphasis on the darkness theme in Dionysius.

102. See J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus* (1949) 74, commenting on propositions 33 and 35 of the *Elements*; Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 48-49; and Dörries, "Υπόστασις: Wort- und Bedeutungsgeschichte" *NAG* (1959) 72.

103. See von Semmelroth, "Geeinte Vielheit", 392-393.

elaborate structures of intermediary "henads" and intelligible gods¹⁰⁴ vanish at a stroke. This exorcism is moreover conscious and deliberate:

For we do not say that being-in-itself is any sort of divine or angelic essence [οὐσία]... nor that which produces life any divinity other than the God above all things... nor, to be brief, that there are [other] principles of being and demiurgic essences and subsistences... we say rather that being-in-itself and life-in-itself and divinity-in-itself are, on the one hand, principally and divinely and causally the one transcendent and super-essential source and cause of all, and, on the other hand, [that they are] participably the providential powers given from God the imparticipable¹⁰⁵.

The πρόοδοι are neither lesser gods nor less God. They are instead God, as it were, in transit, transcendent communications, "imparticipably participated"¹⁰⁶. God *ad extra* is fully God, yet the distinction remains. While it may be a distinction difficult for many to accept¹⁰⁷, it is still evident from the texts. Nor, in the face of the quotation above and of its twin¹⁰⁸, do we understand how Corsini can maintain his thesis of created νοητά. While he points¹⁰⁹ to the use of ὑποστάτης in the lines immediately following the above passage, we do not see how that term, any more than ἐπικρατέω or προκατάρχω, necessarily refers the πρόοδοι to a lower level of *subsistent* being than the divine. God indeed gives his πρόοδος reality¹¹⁰, hence

104. See *Elements*, propositions 113-183 (Dodds) 100-161 and 257-294.

105. Οὐ γὰρ οὐσίαν τινὰ θεῖαν ἢ ἀγγελικὴν εἶναι φάμεν τὸ αὐτοεῖναι... οὐδὲν ζωογό-
νον ἄλλην θεότητα παρὰ τὴν ὑπέρθεον πάντων... οὐτε, συνελόντα εἰπεῖν, ἀρχικῶς τῶν
ὄντων καὶ δημιουργικῶς οὐσίας καὶ ὑποστάσεις... Ἀλλ' αὐτοεῖναι καὶ αὐτοζῶν καὶ
αὐτοθεότητά φάμεν ἀρχικῶς μὲν καὶ θεϊκῶς καὶ αἰτιατικῶς τὴν μίαν πάντων ὑπεράρχιον
καὶ ὑπερούσιον ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν, μεθεκτῶς δὲ τὰς ἐκδιδομένας ἐκ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀμεθέκτου
προνοητικῶς δυνάμεις. *DN* XI.6 953C-956A (222:6-16). Exactly the same proviso appears
earlier in the *DN*, see V.2 816D-817A (181:16-21).

106. *DN* II.5 644A (129:3). The phrase τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα, is admittedly echoed
in Proclus' *Elements*, esp. prop. 23: πᾶν τὸ ἀμέθεκτον ὑφίστησιν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ τὰ μετεχόμε-
να, καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ μετεχόμεναι ὑποστάσεις εἰς ἀμεθέκτους ὑπάρξεις ἀνατείνονται (Dodds)
26. Proclus is here, however, clearly speaking about the sort of intermediate entities we have
just seen Dionysius specifically reject. The latter's μετεχόμενα are instead God communicating
himself in his energies which, "in the measure that these transcend all created participations...
remain united in the super-essence" (Lossky, "Aporphasis and Trinitarian Theology", 26-27).
Thus see *DN* II.11 649B (133:14-15): the divine διακρίσις is δωρουμένη... πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσι
καὶ ὑπερχέουσα τὰς τῶν ὄλων ἀγαθῶν μετουσίας.

107. See, for example, the articles by R. D. Williams, "The Philosophical Structures of
Palamism" *ECR* IX (1977) 23-44 and esp. 36-38; and B. Schultze, "Grundfragen des
theologischen Palamismus" *OS* xxiv (1975) 105-135 and esp. 133-134.

108. *DN* V.2 816C-817A (181:7-21, esp. 16-21).

109. *Il tratto*, 140.

110. So see the definition of ὑποστάτης given in Lampe, 1461.

the priority of his essence, but not separate existence. Dionysius' point is clear, in fact reiterated immediately after ὑποστάτης¹¹¹, and to deny it would be precisely to fail to recognize him as having fully exploited that ambiguity or gap in pagan thought between the transcendent and the νοητά. He has taken the step suggested by Armstrong¹¹² and eliminated the independent intelligibles as unnecessary, thus freeing himself in the process to use the pagan terminology as he chooses.

b) Δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.

Here we deal with two expressions that are both familiar in Neoplatonist usage¹¹³, but allied in Dionysius to the altered sense of πρόοδος and διάκρισις. Thus in *DN* II.7 we find him writing that

...if we should call the super-essential hiddenness by the name of God, or life, or essence, or light, or reason, we in fact conceive of nothing other than the powers proceeding out to us from it, whether they be deifying, or creative of essence, or life-giving, or granting wisdom...¹¹⁴

It is evident from the above that δύναμις is practically synonymous with πρόοδος, practically because we seem further along the road to the actual contact of the uncreated with the creature, to the processions of God as we receive them. If his procession be the origin, the fount of our being and beatitude, then power or virtue is on the way to the realization of that being and beatitude, to God as we receive him, thus the μεθεκτικῶς of *DN* XI.6 above¹¹⁵. It is the same God who is communicated in his powers and transcendent in his essence. While all being and all virtue in creation derive "from [his] super-essential power"¹¹⁶, yet "in no way are the infinite and infinitely created powers ever able to blunt the super-infinite activity of his power that causes power to be"¹¹⁷. By means of his δύναμις God grants his creatures the potential for communion with himself, for "deification itself"¹¹⁸. The antinomy is stated again clearly in the following from *CH* XIII: "the

111. *DN* XI.6 956B (223:10-12).

112. See above, 49, and 184 note 9 of Armstrong's "Negative Theology".

113. For δύναμις as a divine reality in late antique religion, see Hans Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*, new ed. by Michel Tardieu (1978) 77-78. For its use in Proclus, see Gersh, *Κίνησις-Ἀκίνητος: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* (1973) 24-48. For ἐνέργεια in Proclus, see Rosán, *Proclus*, 69-74; and Gersh, *Κίνησις*, 81-101; and in the Neoplatonists generally, Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 37-44.

114....εἰ τὴν ὑπερουσίαν χρυφιώτητα Θεὸν ἢ ζωὴν ἢ οὐσίαν ἢ φῶς ἢ λόγον ὀνομάσαι μὲν, οὐδὲν ἕτερον νοοῦμεν ἢ τὰς εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐξ αὐτῆς προαγομένας δυνάμεις ἐκθεωτικὰς ἢ οὐσιοποιούσας ἢ ζωογόνους ἢ σοφοδωρούς. *DN* II.7 645A (131:7-10).

115. See Lossky, "Darkness and Light", 41, as well as "Théologie négative", 240 and von Semmelroth, "Erlöser", 369.

116. *DN* VII.3 892B (201:21); see also VIII.6 893CD (204:2)

117. *DN* VIII.2 889D-892A (201:7-10).

118. *DN* VIII.5 893A (202:22).

divine power unceasingly advances and penetrates all and yet to all is invisible, not only as transcending everything in super-essential manner, but also as hiddenly sending forth among all things its providential energies"¹¹⁹.

The concluding term above, activity or ἐνέργεια, is the last of the basic terms employed by Dionysius to express God *ad extra*. It is used several times in a manner equivalent to πρόοδος¹²⁰. We note in particular *DN IX.9*: God moves to creation "by means of his providential processions and energies"¹²¹. In the same passage, however – indeed in almost the same breath – Dionysius goes on to speak of God's motion (the subject of the passage) as "the unswerving procession of the energies". This would appear to imply something of a distinction between the two terms. We suggest that the distinction is of the same nature as that between πρόοδος and δύναμις only, as it were, more so. Ἐνέργεια represents something concrete, present or realized¹²², although we stress that here we are speaking not of the effects of God's activities, but of himself in action. Thus there appears to be a sequence or progression to the three terms. Πρόοδος to δύναμις to ἐνέργεια might be taken as parallel in the mode of God *ad extra* to the creaturely triad given in the *CH* of οὐσία - δύναμις - ἐνέργεια:¹²³ the progress from essence to potential to expression. The parallel can certainly not be pushed too far since in God such distinctions cannot be too clearly drawn and the terms do tend to shade one into the other. Nonetheless, it does appear to us to be a useful one in light of the distinction of modes of being in God. The divine essence is totally transcendent and Dionysius will thus never, as would for example an Augustine, speak of a naturally Trinitarian image imprinted on the creature¹²⁴. Yet, as we see in Chapter II below, the creature's mode of being is called to become a reflection of God's. This can then only be of God *ad extra*, and therefore our suggested parallel. Ἐνέργεια, in any case, while used occasionally like πρόοδος, appears far more often, and usually in the plural, to denote concrete

119. Ἐλεγε γὰρ ὁ τοῦτο φήσας ὡς ἡ θεαρχικὴ δύναμις ἐπὶ πάντα φοιτῶσα χωρεῖ καὶ διὰ πάντων ἀσχέτως διήκει καὶ πᾶσιν αἰθεῖς ἐστὶν ἀφανὴς οὐ μόνον ὡς πάντων ὑπερουσίως ἐξηρημένη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς κριτικῶς ἐπὶ πάντα διείσα τὰς προνοητικὰς αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας. *CH XIII.300 D-301A* (44:17-20).

120. See *DN IX.5 912D* (210:9): God proceeds to all things κατ' ἐνέργειαν μίαν. Note the use of the singular also in *CH III.2 165B* (18:16-17) where it is the vocation of the reason-endowed creature to reveal the divine activity in itself.

121. *DN IX.9 916C* (213:14).

122. See Gersh, *Κίνησις*, 91 note 1.

123. *CH XI.2 284D* (42:1-2).

124. In this Dionysius is typical of Greek triadology generally: see, for example, von Balthasar's critical remarks in *Kosmische Liturgie*, 2d ed. (1961) 91-92. On Augustine's triadology, see his reluctance regarding the use even of the term *persona* for the persons of the Trinity, *de Trinitate* V.9-10, *PL XLII* 916-918. For the *vestigia trinitatis* in the human soul, see for example *de Trin.* X and XIV, *PL XLII* 971-984 and 1035-1058, as well as *Civitas Dei* XI.26.23-26, *PL XLI* 339-340. Jerome provides an amusing example of Latin difficulties with the Greek ὑπόστασις in *Ep.* 15, *PL XIII* 180B-185B.

activity. It is God in his energies who is present and active in his creation¹²⁵. In *CH* XIII he brings the first rank of angels into being and so into “participation of his providential energies”¹²⁶. God “extends” in *DN* XIII to all things “by means of his unfailing gifts and unceasing energies”¹²⁷. The particular association of the term with God active in creation is again borne out by the frequency of its appearance in the *CH* and *EH*¹²⁸, precisely the treatises dealing specifically with the structures and ways of created being. Of the terms so far discussed, ἐνέργεια is the one most often and most intimately linked with the divine Providence¹²⁹, and it is God as Providence that is the subject of the *DN*.

Before turning to Dionysius’ use of πρόνοια, let us summarize our discussion so far around *DN* II. God as God is totally other, outside any and all categories of being and non-being, neither one nor many. The emphasis on transcendence so characteristic of late Neoplatonism is taken up and exploited in order to allow for the Trinity of Revelation and, by means of another distinction in God’s being, creation and revelation. God is God both as the infinitely “other”, the Three persons in unity, and as God “outside” God, differenced indivisibly and extended “ecstatically” into immanence. This second mode, and second only in a certain logically subordinate sense, at once does away with the pagans’ emanations of intermediate deities and provides the foundations for human existence, knowledge, and hope of participation in God. It is the ground of creation, of revelation, and of beatitude. Both the names of God and the hierarchies of men and of angels are thus the expressions, as we shall note, of the divine out-passing, which the Areopagite has labeled with the terms just discussed, and of God’s “return [ἐπιστροφή]” to himself. God in “extension” and “return” is finally God as love, the fundamental origin and hope of created being. We turn then to the discussion of this cycle of God in relation, and to the one term that Dionysius understands as yielding the whole range of meanings of God *ad extra*: πρόνοια.

3. Πρόνοια: God’s love in motion

We find Dionysius using πρόνοια to denote all of God’s activities in creation. In *DN* III.1 it appears in parallel with προόδος¹³⁰. Again, in *DN* V, the

125. See von Semmelroth, “Ausstrahlende Licht”, esp. 483.

126. *CII* XIII.4 308A (49:7); see also XIII.4 305C (48:15-16), where the first ranks of angels share in distributing.

127. *DN* XIII.1 977B (227:1).

128. For θεαρχική ἐνέργεια, see *CH* XIII.4 305C (48:16); *XV*.2 329C (53:3-4); for θεία ἐνέργεια, *CH* III.2 165B (18:16); and *EH* V.1.7 508C (109:22). For προνοητική ἐνέργεια *CH* XIII.4 308A (49:11) and *Ep*. IX.3 1109D (302:4); θεαρχική ἐνέργεια *Ibid.* 305C (48:16), *XI*.2 329C (53:3-4); *EH* V.1.7 509A (110:3-4), to cite some examples.

129. Note the following parallelism in *Ep*. IX.3 1109C (202:11-203:5): God is ἐξήρηται τῶν ὅλων... ἐν ἑαυτῷ ταύτῳ καὶ αἰδίως ὢν... ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τὰς ὅλας καὶ παντελεῖς προνοίας ἀγαθοουργῶν... ὥς ἂν τις φαίη τὰς προνοητικὰς ἐνεργείας ἐν τῇ μονιμότητι, καὶ τὴν μονὴν ἐν τῷ προνοεῖν, συμφυῶς ἅμα καὶ ὑπερφυῶς ἔχων.

130. *DN* III.1 680B (138:1-4).

Providence of God is linked with his procession in explicit opposition to God *in se*: "it is, then, the intent of this treatise to celebrate all the revelatory names of Providence, and not to express the super-essential goodness... but Providence which has been declared good and creative of good"¹³¹. The divine names are the manifestation (ἐκφαντική) of the one Providence. Comprehending God in all of his relations with the creature, at once embracing all while abiding in itself transcendent, Providence is God so far as the creature is concerned¹³². It is without beginning or end, in procession while abiding unchanged in itself, both all-pervasive and wholly ineffable¹³³. All things share somehow in Providence as their universal source (ἀρχή) and cause (αἰτία):¹³⁴ "the divine Providence is in all things and no one of the things which are is without it"¹³⁵.

All of the terms so far mentioned find their inclusion and summation in Providence. In a passage concerning God's ἔξω (to which we shall return), Dionysius declares that God moves "outside himself... by means of [his] providences with regard to all things"¹³⁶. Again, in the *CH*, he speaks of Providence as "gushing forth [ἐκβλυζομένη]" from God¹³⁷. Providence is then inclusive of the divine ἔκστασις, God's "super-essential ecstatic power". As the "benevolent procession" of God outside himself, "by goodness multiplied without division" in creation¹³⁸, Providence is equivalent to both the divine διάκρισις and the divine πρόοδος. As that in which all things participate¹³⁹, as παναίτιος through pre-containing all¹⁴⁰, and as cause of both the being and well-being of creation through its embrace, indwelling, and lending of itself to all¹⁴¹, Providence stands as well for δύναμις and ἐνέργεια. It enables and operates all things, manipulates even evil to the good, and dispenses itself in accord with the proper and varied goods of its

131. Ταύτας οὖν ὁ λόγος ὑμῆσαι ποθεῖ τὰς τῆς προνοίας ἐκφαντορικὰς θεωνυμίας. Οὐ γὰρ ἐκφράσαι τὴν αὐτοῦπερούσιον... ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐκπεφασμένην ἀγαθοποιὸν πρόνοιαν ὑπεροχικῶς ἀγαθότητα καὶ πάντων ἀγαθῶν. *DN* V.2 816C (181:7-8, 11-12).

132. *DN* XII.2 969C (224:13-225:1): θεότης ἡ πάντα θεωμένη πρόνοια. Note also in the same text Dionysius' derivation of θεότης itself from θεάω. This equivalence of "divinity" with a divine activity is paralleled in the Cappadocians; see below, Chapter VII. For πρόνοια God, see von Semmelroth, "Geeinte Vielheit", esp. 401.

133. *Ep.* IX.3 1109B-D (202:1-203:5). See the comments in Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 72; Roques, *L'Univers*, 114; and Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, 112-114.

134. *CH* IV.1 177C (20:7, 11); and VII.4 212C (32:11).

135. *DN* IV.33 733B (178:7-8).

136. *DN* IV.13 712B (159:11).

137. *CH* IV.1 177C (20:14-15).

138. *DN* II.5 641D-644A (128:15-129:3).

139. *CH* IV.1 177C (20:13-14).

140. *DN* I.7 597A (120:7).

141. *Ep.* IX.3 1109C (202:7-9); see also *CH* VII.4 212C (32:11-12).

different creatures (ἀναλογικῶς)¹⁴². It stands for the whole cycle of exodus and return.

Does this mean that it is therefore little better than – once more – poorly disguised, and poorly adapted, Neoplatonism? Now it is certainly true that this term figured prominently in later, post-Plotinian Neoplatonism as belonging to the gods above Νοῦς and no longer, as in Plotinus, to the lower realms of Soul and Fate¹⁴³. Neither will we deny the parallels which exist between Dionysius and his pagan predecessors¹⁴⁴. Here again, though, we see Dionysius as using certain points of convergence in Neoplatonist thought in order to express what was for him a traditional vision of the Christian mystery, one that does not overlook sin and the Cross – and Dionysius does not ignore the Fall¹⁴⁵ – but which looks primarily to Christ as the highest expression at once of God's love and of the deepest reality of created being itself. In other words, for Dionysius God's Providence and the created nature that it sustains and draws to itself both presuppose the Incarnation. In order to express this, the Areopagite freely exploited the pagans. It is, for example, by no means clear in the latter where Providence belongs, i.e., to which level of the gods¹⁴⁶. There is no such ambiguity in the *CD*. Providence, as προοδος, is from God. We shall see below the same process at work in the understanding of divine love.

For now, let us move briefly from Providence in the *DN* to note where and

142. *DN* IV.33 733C (178:17).

143. For πρόνοια in Plotinus as governing only the lower realms beneath Soul, see *Enn.* III.2.1; 1.9; 2.2-3; and 3.1. It is equivalent to ἀνάγκη, the basis of karma; see also the article by Müller, "Plotinos über die Vorsehung" *Philog.* 26 (1913) 338-357. For its role, much expanded, in Proclus, see *Elements*, prop. 120, 104-106, and for comment, the article by Beierwaltes, "Pronoia und Freiheit in der Philosophie des Proclus" *FZPT* 24 (1977) 88-111. We do not, however, feel bound to accept Beierwaltes' conclusions (*Ibid.* 110-111) concerning the "necessary" conflict between the Neoplatonists' Providence and the Incarnation of Christ in Dionysius — thus our argument following.

144. See esp. Koch, *Beziehungen*, 74-86, and for ἐξως, 66-72. Brons' contentions, in his article devoted specifically to πρόνοια in the *CD*, ("πρόνοια und das Verhältnis von Metaphysik und Geschichte bei Dionysius Areopagita" *FZPT* 24 [1977] 165-186) again appear to us as extreme. He claims, rightly, that the term encapsulates the Dionysian vision, 165-166. He goes on, however, to declare that the effect on Dionysius' Christian pretensions is disastrous, 167-171, and 175-177. The Incarnation in particular falls victim to the generalized scheme of procession — return, cause and effect, and becomes merely a timeless "doublet" of the larger plan. It brings nothing new to the world, 178-185. The last phrase reveals, we think, Brons' own tradition, for if the coming of Christ is understood as something entirely new and fundamentally unrelated to the world rather than first and most deeply the fulfillment of created being, then indeed Dionysius must be judged inadequate. In our eyes, though, he is not so, but instead an exponent of the same tradition expressed in the quotation from Maximus the Confessor opening this book and, for example, in Gregory of Nyssa. See Chapter VII.

145. See Chapter IV, 177-181.

146. Thus see Gersh, *Κίνησις*, 93-94 and esp. 93, note 1.

how Dionysius employs the term in the treatises concerning the hierarchies. In so doing we move from the abstract to the concrete, to the history of God's economy as set forth in Scripture. In every hierarchy each being is given its proper share (ἀναλόγως) of the divine light (θεῖον φῶς) through the action of Providence¹⁴⁷. The same divine light, together with its distribution and the enabling of the creature to participate in it, comes under the heading of Providence. The latter's immediacy is never compromised. In dealing with the guardian angels allotted to the nations, Dionysius carefully qualifies the doctrine: "God has not divided his governance of us among other gods or nations", rather that governance remains always a property of the "unique Providence directing all things [τῆς μιᾶς ἀπάντων]"¹⁴⁸. There are no intermediary divinities. Again, in discussing Israel's unique fidelity to God – and we note that Dionysius' failure to deny other nations some share in divine revelation need not be read as pagan systematizing but instead as a certain faithfulness to God's generosity and to his own Christian tradition¹⁴⁹ – Dionysius observes that while angels indeed act as guides, "the source [ἀρχή] and Providence of all is one"¹⁵⁰. Finally, Providence in the hierarchies remains ever itself above essence (ὑπερούσιος) and transcendent (ὑπεριδρυμένη) with regard to all, directing our angelic initiators to guide us to the knowledge of itself as "itself the proper source" of all (ἐπ' αὐτὴν ὡς οἰκείαν ἀρχήν)¹⁵¹.

If one of the modes of its expression toward humanity in the old dispensation was this assignment of angelic guides and guardians, then, as we have just stressed, the expression of Providence in the new dispensation (and so *par excellence* of God as he comes forth from himself to his creation) is Jesus himself:

What might one say concerning the philanthropy according to Christ which has poured out peace... but indeed that we might effect divine things together with them [the angels] in accordance with the Providence of Jesus who works all in all, and creates peace ineffable... and reconciles us to himself in the Spirit and through himself and in It [the Spirit] to the Father¹⁵².

Jesus is the expression of God's Providence revealed and proclaimed in the Scripture, and mystically or symbolically – a serious term in Dionysius to which

147. CH XIII.3 301D (46:1).

148. CH IX.4 261C (39:12).

149. See our remarks concerning Clement of Alexandria and the latter's attitude to Greek thought, Chapter VI below, 263-264 vs. *Gott u.S.*, 58-59.

150. CH IX.4 261C (39:5-6).

151. *Ibid.*

152. "Τί ἂν τις εἴποι περὶ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν εἰρηνιχότητος φιλανθρωπίας... ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῖς τὰ θεῖα κατὰ δύναντιν συνεργήσωμεν κατὰ πρόνοιαν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν" ἐνεργοῦντος καὶ ποιοῦντος εἰρήνην ἄρρητον... καὶ ἀποκαταλάσσοντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ δι' ἑαυτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ πατρὶ;" DN XI.5 953A (221:5-10).

we shall return in following chapters – realized in the Church's liturgy. It is Jesus as Providence who is recalled by the bishop at the altar: "the divine hierarchy, standing before the holy altar, hymns the... sacred theurgies of Jesus, our most divine Providence"¹⁵³.

We must note the two other terms appearing in the texts above as synonymous with God's dispensation in Christ, φιλανθρωπία and θεουργία. While the latter is of distinctly pagan provenance¹⁵⁴ – and we shall return to this theme below – it is once again a term that Dionysius has taken and put to his own use. First, "theurgy" expressed pagan antiquity's desire, and awareness of the need, to transcend merely intellectual communication with the divine¹⁵⁵. Thus, secondly, it stressed the grace, gift, of God or the gods¹⁵⁶. Dionysius, certainly aware of the potential convergences thus carried by the word, further transformed it, such that, in Rorem's words, it no longer denoted "works addressed to the gods... [but] God's mighty acts"¹⁵⁷. It is thus used most often as an expression for the economy of Christ, and for Christ himself as our Providence¹⁵⁸.

Concerning φιλανθρωπία, it is surely mistaken to reject Dionysius' use of this traditionally Christian word as "unbiblical" because it is "merely" the application of the more general divine ἀγαθότης to our level of being¹⁵⁹. This simply misses Dionysius' point, which is that both, divine goodness and God's φιλανθρωπία in Christ, are a function of God's love. Christ is the supreme

153. "Ἐνθεν ὁ θεῖος ἱεράρχης ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καταστάς ὑμνεῖ τὰς εἰρημένας ἱερὰς θεουργίας Ἰησοῦ τῆς θειοτάτης ἡμῶν προνοίας", *EH* III.3.12. 441C (92:5-7).

154. On theurgy, see Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*, and the articles by E. R. Dodds, "Theurgy and Its Relationship to Neoplatonism" *JRS* XXXVIII (1947) 55-69; P. Boyance, "Théurgie et téléstique néoplatonicienne" *RHR* 247 (1955) 189-209; Festugière, "Proclus et la religion traditionnelle" in *Études de Philosophie Grecque* (1971) 575-584; C. Zintzen, "Die Wertung von Mystik und Magie in der neuplatonischen Philosophie" *RM* 108 (1965) 71-100; and, for other works, our Bibliography below.

155. Thus see Iamblichus, *de Myst.* I.3 and II.1 (des Places) 41-43 and 95-97 respectively. For comment, see Larsen, *Jamblique de Chalcis* (1972) esp. 176-178. For an interesting theory regarding Dionysius' relationship to Iamblichan theurgy, see J. M. Rist, "Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul", in *Neoplatonism from Athens to Chartres*, (H. J. Westra, ed.; Leiden: 1992) 135-161. We shall return to this theme and essay in the conclusion of this essay.

156. See again Iamblichus, *Ibid.*, and Larsen *Jamblique*, 178-181 and 184-185. See also, Proclus, *Théol. Plat.* I.25 (Saffrey/Westerink) 109-113.

157. Rorem, *Symbols*, 14-15.

158. See *CH* IV.4 181B (22:3); VII.2 208CD (29:11-12, 18); VIII.3 209B (30:8); XIII.4 305C (48:18); *EH* I.1 369A (63:4) and 372A (64:1); I.2 372B (64:13); I.5 377B (68:13), III.2 425D (81:5-6, 8); III.3.5 432B (84:18); III.3.10 440B (90:9) and ff; III.3.12 441CD (92:3, 6, 12); III.3.15 445BC (94:13, 17); IV.3.4 477D (99:6); IV.3.12 484D (103:3) and 485B (103:21); V.1.3 504C (106:20); V.1.4 504D (107:3); V.3.7 513C (113:22); *DN* I.4 592B (113:12); II.1 637C (124:7); and II.2 644C (130:5-10).

159. Bruns, "Ἰλρόνοια", 176.

expression of the overflowing love that raised us up even when fallen¹⁶⁰, and φιλανθρωπία is generally used exclusively in reference to the Incarnation¹⁶¹. To say that he is also expressive of the love that God as Providence holds for all of creation is hardly an un-Christian idea¹⁶². Providence is therefore incarnate in Jesus who both ordains and is expressed in the Church's liturgy¹⁶³, but the Incarnation is as well the result – we might almost say the inescapable result – of that movement of God that weaves together all the Dionysian universe.

a) The divine ἔρως.

Here is the key to Dionysius' Providence and, with it, to his understanding of God *ad extra* and the whole of the *CD*. Providence and love are in a sense identical¹⁶⁴. Dionysius' ἔρως is the "motor" of Providence¹⁶⁵, the origin of God's movement giving role to creation. "It [God's ἔρως] did not suffer itself to remain infertile in itself, rather it moved itself"¹⁶⁶. The movement of love¹⁶⁷ brings about love's diffusion: God, "on account of an overflowing of loving goodness [ἐρωτικῆς ἀγαθότητος]" moves outside himself" bewitched, as it were, by goodness and charity and love"¹⁶⁸. Thus does he introduce himself into the realm of contingent beings as creator, sustainer, and as τέλος. Here is the source of the divine ἔκστασις, and thence of all God's πρόοδοι. This is his "super-essential, ecstatic power". He moves into creation because, simply, he desires it.

Dionysius, as we noted, uses circular imagery for πρόνοια¹⁶⁹ i.e., the cycle of

160. *DN* VI.2 856D (191:16).

161. For φιλανθρωπία in direct reference to the Incarnation, see *CH* I.3 124A (9:8); IV.4 181B (22:23); VII.3 209B (30:10); *EH* III.1.1 393A (70:5); III.3.4 429AB (82:23-83:1, 9); III.3.8 437A (88:10); III.3.11 441A (91:9); III.3.12 444A (92:23); III.3.13 444C (93:17); V.3.5 512C (112:9-10); *DN* I.4 592A (113:6); II.3 640C (126:1-2); II.6 644C (130:9); II.10 648D (135:2); VI.2 856D (191:16); IX.5 953A (221:5); *Ep.* III 1069B (159:4); and *Ep.* IV 1072B (160:8). It is used twice in reference to the Old Testament Economy: *CH* VIII.2 240D (34:17) and 241B (35:5-6). Elsewhere it stands for divine clemency or mercy with regard to sinners: *EH* VII.3.6 561D (127:21); and *Ep.* VIII.4 1093D (184:10). Finally, Dionysius speaks of the angels sharing in Jesus' "philanthropic virtue", *CH* VII.2 208C (112) and of their "philanthropy" in watching over and guiding us, *Ep.* VIII.1 1085C (173:7) and VIII.6 1100D (192:1).

162. For the same view as ours, see J. M. Rist, "A Note on Eros and Agape in Ps.-Dionysius" *VC* 20 (1966) esp. 236.

163. Note *CH* I.3 121C-124A (8:14-9:15) together with I.1-2 120B-121A (7:3-11).

164. See von Semmelroth, "Aufstieg", 33.

165. *DN* IV.14 712C (160:6-7).

166. οὐκ εἶπεν αὐτὸν ἄγονον ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένειν, *DN* IV.10 708B (155:18-19); for the use of ἄγονος here, see Chapter II below, 54.

167. Dionysius goes to some pains to justify his use of ἔρως as the equivalent of ἀγάπη, *DN* IV.11-12 708C-709D (156-158).

168. *DN* IV.13 712AB (159:10-14).

169. *DN* XII.2 969C (225:1).

abiding, procession, and return. Here, too, we discover the basic role of ἔξως as the expression and definition of divine Providence. Just as through love God moves to create, so is it also through love that he works in creation to bring the latter to himself. He himself works, in other words, the ἐπιστροφή of his creatures. The latter is a feature of Dionysian thought that is clearly revealed in our author's use of the verb ἐπιστρέφω. When used of God it is in the active voice indicating his activity¹⁷⁰, and, when referring to the creatures, we find the passive (middle) voice¹⁷¹. We recall that the divine and creaturely ἐκστάσεις are reciprocal, and understand thus that the activity or ἐνέργεια of the divine ἔκστασις is this same divine love working in the creature to bring about the ἔκστασις of the latter. God pours himself into immanence in order that the realm of contingent being may transcend itself in and through him. The circle imagery is indeed apt, suggesting both the process of divine activity proceeding outwards to bring all back to itself¹⁷², and the principle of the double ἔκστασις having its beginning and end in God¹⁷³. Providence as ἔξως is thus

a certain single and simple power [δύναμις] which impels itself toward a kind of unifying mingling, from the Good to the last of those which are, and from the last of those which are back again (through all things) to the Good; from itself and through itself and towards itself circling round itself, and ever retracing itself identically towards itself¹⁷⁴.

While there can be no doubt that this circular scheme, and the important role of ἔξως in particular, owes much to the forms of late Neoplatonism¹⁷⁵, the degree of that debt is still open to some debate. We have chosen, after Dionysius' own

170. Thus see *CH* I.1 120B (7:6); *DN* IV.4 700AB (148:9, 15); IV.6 701B (150:11); IV.10 708B (155:16); VI.2 856D (192:1); IX.6 913C (211:17); X.1 937A (214:15); XI.1 948D (217:8); and *Ep.* VIII.6 1097C (188:13).

171. So see *CH* VIII.1 240A (33:15); IX.1 257B (36:7); IX.2 257C (36:17); IX.3 261A (38:13); XII.3 293B (43:17); XV.9 340A (59:2); *EH* III.3.10 440A (89:17, 18); IV.3.1 476A (97:2); *DN* IV.4 700B (148:15, 20); IV.10 705D (154:22); IV.14 712C (160:11) (God as love being returned to himself); VI.1 856C (191:8); IX.6 913C (211:16-17); IX.6 913C (211:17); XII.3 980C (228:14); and *Ep.* VIII.1 1088A (175:1). I am grateful to Mr. P. E. Rorem for having been directed to this distinction, present as well in such important and related verbs as ἀνάγω (see Chapter II below, 89 note 89) and ἀνατείνω.

172. *DN* IV.14 712C-713A (160:5-15); and concerning the "eternity" of this circle (*Ibid.* [160:12-13]), see our discussion of creation in the *CD* in Chapter II below, 54-59.

173. See the article by G. Horn, "Amour et Extase" *RAM* 6 (1925) 278-289, esp. 288.

174. "...μία τις ἔστιν ἀπλή δύναμις ἡ αὐτοκινητική πρὸς ἐνωτικήν τινα κρᾶσιν ἐκ τὰγαθοῦ μέχρι τοῦ τῶν ὄντων ἐσχάτου καὶ ἀπ' ἐκείνου πάλιν ἐξῆς διὰ πάντων εἰς τὰγαθὸν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς καὶ δι' ἑαυτῆς καὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτὴν ἀνακλωῦσα καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀεὶ ταυτῶς ἀνελιττομένη". *DN* IV.17 713D (162:1-5).

175. See Koch, *Beziehungen*, 66-72, and Beierwaltes, *Proclus*, 165-239, esp. 165-191.

arguments¹⁷⁶ and in the light of the tradition he represents¹⁷⁷, to call his ἔρως simply love. In our view he has once again, and here most strikingly, exploited the parallels in pagan usage and accentuated them in favor of a Christian interpretation. It is true that, especially, Proclus makes considerable use of the ἔρως theme as the moving principle of his system¹⁷⁸, but not at all clear, as Gersh has demonstrated¹⁷⁹, that the pagan's is a downflowing love coming from God, and certainly not an ἔρως ἐκστατικός¹⁸⁰. Rist expresses our own feelings admirably: "It would seem merely perverse to deny that Dionysius' Christianity is the direct case of this adaptation"¹⁸¹.

b) Κίνησις

We have spoken often of motion in relation to God's out-passing and Providence, for example that God "moved himself [ἐκίνησε ἑαυτόν]"¹⁸² out of love to create. Motion in God is linked directly to love and thereby to Providence, to the *ad extra*, in another passage worth quoting at some length. Dionysius is endeavoring to explain how God is both lover and beloved, the love which causes motion and the love which is moved:

...by the one he is moved and by the other moves; or, that he is himself both sent forth from himself and cause of motion [in others]. They call him at once both beloved and desired in as much as he is the Good and Beautiful, and both desire and love as a power at once setting in motion and leading up to itself. The same is alone on its own account both the Good and the Beautiful... [He is] a manifestation of himself through himself and [he is] both beneficent procession and loving [yearning] motion of the transcendent unity... self-moving... pre-existing in the Good, and gushing forth from the Good to those things which are, and

176. DN IV.11-12 708C-709D (156-158).

177. See Chapter VII below, 314-315 and Rist, *Eros and Psyche* (1964) esp. 206-208 for Origen's understanding of ἔρως as equivalent to the New Testament ἀγάπη.

178. See Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 306-312.

179. *Κίνησις*, 123-127, here directly in opposition to Nygren, *Eros and Agape* (1953) 569-570. Armstrong, in "Platonic Eros and Christian Agape" *DRev* 79 (1961) 117, while not in apparent agreement with Gersh's later view, also takes opposition to Nygren's basic dichotomy. It would appear to us that Nygren's thought lies behind many of the assumptions fundamental to Brous.

180. Rist, "Eros and Agape in Ps.-Dionysius", 239. See esp. the argument by C. J. de Vogel, "Greek Cosmic Love and the Christian Love of God" *VC* 35 (1981) 57-81; esp. 61-68 and 71-72 for the most thorough demonstration of Dionysius' independence from Proclus and debt to his Christian sources in the use he makes of ἔρως.

181. *Ibid.*

182. DN IV.10 708B (155:19).

again returning to the Good¹⁸³.

This is a splendid summary of our discussion so far. God as love is both moved and moves his creature in so far as he is source, sustainer, and goal of his creation. Motion is inclusive, as a name of Providence, of that cycle of abiding, procession and return that characterizes Dionysius' thought. The text is a description of both God *in se* and *ad extra*. The transcendent God leaps forth from himself and becomes in a sense motion, movement, both proceeding outwards into immanence and bringing all back with itself to rest in him. In the statement that he becomes a "manifestation of himself" we have an indication pointing toward the development of the hierarchies and, particularly, to Christ and the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. God departs from himself in order to reveal himself. The act of revelation, the revealer and the revealed are one and the same: God loving and loved, the divine Providence.

Motion is the paradox essential to Dionysius' thought, one which, we might add, has both Neoplatonist roots¹⁸⁴ and specific sources and targets in the Christian tradition¹⁸⁵. It is a paradox because the divine is by definition fixed, immobile (ἀκίνητος). "How", our author asks, "can the theologians [the writers of Scriptures] speak of the divine as at once unmoving yet also in motion and proceeding to all things?"¹⁸⁶ They can, he replies, because this is proper to God who is "dissimilar to all things [ἀνόμοιος πᾶσιν]... who is both fixed and unmoving [ἑστῶς καὶ ἀκίνητος] and enthroned in eternity, yet is also in motion and proceeding to all things"¹⁸⁷. God is he who in "ever-moving abides in himself"¹⁸⁸ or who, according to the apophatic formula of the *MT*, is "neither fixed nor in motion"¹⁸⁹. Transcendent with regard to both motion and rest, God grounds both in his own being just as we saw that he grounds both the One and the Many in himself. While this is the paradox, the essential for Dionysius rests in the fact that

183. "... τῷ μὲν κινεῖται, τῷ δὲ κινεῖ, ἥ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἑαυτῷ ἐστι προαγωγικός καὶ κινητικός. Ταύτη δὲ ἀγαπητὸν μὲν καὶ ἐραστὸν αὐτὸν καλοῦσιν ὡς καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν, ἐρωτα δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ ἀγάπην ὡς κινητικὴν ἡμᾶ καὶ ὡς ἀναγωγὸν δύναμιν ὄντα ἐφ' ἑαυτόν, τὸ μόνον αὐτὸ δι' ἑαυτὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν... ἔκφανσιν ὄντα ἑαυτοῦ δι' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐξηρημένης ἐνάσεως ἀγαθὴν πρόοδον... αὐτοκίνητον... προοῦσαν ἐν τᾷ ἀγαθῷ καὶ ἐκ τᾷ ἀγαθοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐκβλύζομένην καὶ αὐτῆς εἰς τᾷ ἀγαθόν ἐπιστρεφομένην". *DN* IV.14 712C (160:3-11).

184. For the philosophers, however, motion is not proper to the One; see Dillon, *Iamblichus*, 44, and Gersh, *Κίνησις*, 2 and 100. Note also the parallels between Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor in their common defense of Providence/Κίνησις as from God; see L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator* (1965) 70 and 73-74.

185. For sources, see esp. Gregory of Nyssa (Chapter VII below, 305-308) and for targets, Origen (VI) and Evagrius (VIII) 274-276 and 324 respectively.

186. "καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα προϊόντα καὶ κινούμενον", *DN* IX.9 916C (213:7-8).

187. *DN* IX.1 909B (208:4-6).

188. *DN* X.1 937B (215:12).

189. *MT* V 1048A (149:5); see also *DN* V.10 825B (189:13).

he is thus enabled to discover in God's Providence the source of both στάσις and κίνησις in the creation: "For [God] is both στάσις and κίνησις for all that which, beyond all rest and motion, establishes each in its proper λόγος and moves each to its proper motion"¹⁹⁰. The two must be read as in a certain sense equivalent in the creature, the fulfilling of whose proper motion equals its proper rest, i.e., the fulfillment of its λόγος – a term to which we return in Chapter II below – and this ultimately because κίνησις finds in God himself its analog. God *ad extra* is God in motion, motion which is – again quoting at length:

... not mental, nor of the soul, nor physical, but God bringing all things into being and holding them together, and taking forethought for all in every manner of way, and present to all through in his boundless embrace and in his providential processions and energies which extend to everything which is... [divine motion is called] direct, wherein one is to understand... the unswerving procession of the energies and the genesis of everything from him; spiral, as the fixed procession, the generative rest; and circular, as both that which embraces the identical, the means, and the extremes, and holds together that which is embraced, and as the return to himself of what has come forth from him¹⁹¹.

These, then, are the outlines of Dionysius' Providence, the cycle of love which provides the ground for all that is to follow, both in the *CD* and in our essay.

C. THE NAMES: NOTIONAL ICONS, RESONANCES, OF GOD AS PROVIDENCE

In his introduction to Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, H. D. Saffrey points to Dionysius as the first to introduce into Christian theology a treatise concerning the names of God¹⁹². He also specifically dismisses the Cappadocian contribution as no more than "developments of Trinitarian catechesis", notes their distrust of philosophy, and refers his readers finally to Dionysius' debt to Proclus. We, to the contrary, think Saffrey's denial of the Cappadocians' contribution to a theology of the divine names altogether too swift and, in relation to their impact on Dionysius, simply wrong. The Areopagite's debt to Proclus is of course undeniable,

190. *DN* IV.7 704C (153:1-3); see also V.7 821B (185:22-23) and von Semmelroth, "Aufstieg", 28.

191. "...οὐ τὴν νοητὴν, οὐ τὴν ψυχικὴν, οὐ τὴν φυσικὴν, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἰς οὐσίαν ἄγειν τὸν Θεὸν καὶ συνέχειν τὰ πάντα καὶ παντοίως πάντων προνοεῖν καὶ τὸ παρῆναι πᾶσι τῇ πάντων ἀσχετῇ περιοχῇ καὶ ταῖς ἐπὶ τὰ ὄντα πάντα προνοητικαῖς προόδοις καὶ ἐνεργείαις... τὸ μὲν εὐθὺς τὸ ἀκλινὲς νοητέον καὶ τὴν ἀπαρέγκλιτον πρόοδον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τῶν ὄλων γένεσιν, τὸ δὲ ἐλικοειδὲς τὴν σταθερὰν πρόοδον καὶ τὴν γόνιμον στάσιν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ κύκλον τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ τὸ τὰ μέσα καὶ ἄκρα περιέχοντα καὶ περιεχόμενα συνέχειν καὶ τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν τῶν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ προεληλυθότων ἐπιστροφὴν". *DN* IX.9 916CD (213:11-20).

192. *Théol. Plat.*, I, cxci-cxcii.

Whether one chooses to speak of the plan of the *DN* – particularly from Chapter IV onwards – as reflecting the Neoplatonists' *Parmenides* commentaries¹⁹³, or of the "circle" theme whose prominence we have noted, or of the particular names as, for example, the Good in *DN V*, or, in Chapters V-VII, the intelligible triad of οὐσία-ζωή-νοῦς that figures so prominently in post-Plotinian and even Plotinian Neoplatonism¹⁹⁴, or in fact almost every one of the names dealt with in the treatise¹⁹⁵. Yet we have also noted how widely our author differs from the pagans. He, in Armstrong's phrase¹⁹⁶, "knocks the philosophical stuffing" out of the hierarchy of names through his denial of any sort of independent or hypostatic reality to that which the names represent. Instead of referring to separate entities, whether divine or merely "intelligible", all of Dionysius' names direct us instead to the single out-flowing or procession of divine love. We use the verb "direct" intentionally, for it leads us to the fourth point of correspondence between the Dionysian and Cappadocian teaching on God's names. We have already seen how closely Dionysius' teaching follows the first three points listed in this Chapter's introduction as characteristic of Cappadocian theology, i.e., the priority of the apophatic approach in view of divine transcendence, the positive attributions of God as directing us only to the "penumbra" of his being and, therefore, to his energies or powers rather than to his essence. A fourth point remains. The names serve as "notional icons". They point us, as one scholar has said in reference to Gregory of Nyssa's theology, "to an appropriate reality in God"¹⁹⁷.

We begin by noting that for Dionysius the names of God are first of all given. They come to us, before all, through the revelation declared in Scripture. It is a point on which he is quite insistent: "One may neither dare to say nor even to conceive anything [about God] aside from the things which have been declared to

193. See, however, von Ivanka, "Das Aufbau", *Plat. Christ.*, 238-240; Sheldon-Williams, *CambHist.* 462, and von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, 194-195.

194. For its role in Plotinus, see P. Hadot, "Être, Vic, Pensée chez Plotin et avant Plotin", in *Les Sources de Plotin* (1957) 107-141; for Iamblichus, see Dillon, *Iamblichus*, 36-39; and for Proclus, *Elements*, propositions 101ff (Dodds) 91ff; *Théol Plat.*, III.9ff (Saffrey/Westerink) 34ff; and Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 93-117. Dionysius' care to avoid identifying God *in se* (the Trinity) with any aspect of this triad may explain his reluctance to give much prominence to the traditional name, Λόγος, for Christ. It is mentioned once (*DN VII.4* 872C [198:21]), but generally the names "Jesus" or, more rarely, "Christ", are preferred. For background to this consistently apophatic attitude with regard to the Trinity and created triads, particularly ones associated with the Neoplatonist Νοῦς, see Armstrong, "Escape from the One", 86.

195. Corsini, *Il tratto*, 46-57.

196. "Negative Theology", 183.

197. Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, "Simplicité de la nature divine et les distinctions en Dieu selon St. Grégoire de Nysse" *MessPR* 23 (1975) 141.

us in a deiform manner in the sacred scriptures"¹⁹⁸. God as known, or at all knowable, is God revealed in the ἱεροῖς λόγοις of Scripture that he has made the vehicle of his illuminations¹⁹⁹, and, as Dionysius does allow for elsewhere, in the tradition of the saints²⁰⁰. In either case, as one modern theologian writes who might be speaking for both Dionysius and the Cappadocians, "if human forms of thought and speech are to have a transcendent reference to what is really beyond them, this reference must be given to these forms by God himself"²⁰¹.

But still, Dionysius asks, how is it possible for us to ascribe names to God given the impossibility of conceiving (ἐννοῆσαι) the Trinity?²⁰² It is possible, he answers a few chapters later, precisely because it is not the divine essence that is in question, but "the divine names revelatory of Providence [τὰς τῆς προνοίας ἐκφαντορικὰς θεωνυμίας]", of "Providence the creator of good [ἀγαθοποιός] that has revealed itself" and is therefore justly celebrated as "the cause of all good things [πάντων ἀγαθῶν αἰτία]"²⁰³. Providence, God in extension, is God as revealed, and God as revealed is revealed as "the reality [ὑπαρξίς] of goodness, the cause of everything which is;" therefore, "one must celebrate the Providence of God [τῆς θεαρχίας] as source of good in all its effects [ἐκ πάντων τῶν αἰτιατῶν]"²⁰⁴. Cause and ground (ὑπαρξίς) of all, Providence embraces everything, and everything may therefore be seen as in some sense expressive of it. God may thus be called by any of the names of his creation²⁰⁵. His name is every name, and no name²⁰⁶. Here we have the basis for all three of the Dionysian "theologies" or approaches to the divine: the negative (apophatic), the positive (cataphatic), and the symbolical²⁰⁷. As the super-essence God is beyond any attribute we may conceive while as Providence, in his energies, he leaves no creature without its proper manifestation of the universal ground of being. As

198. "οὐ τολμητέον εἰπεῖν οὔτε μὴν ἐννοῆσαι τι παρὰ τὰ θειωδῶς ἡμῖν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν λογίων ἐκπεφασμένον". *DN* I.2 588C (110:3-4); see also I.1 588A (108:6-8). He does use unbiblical names, though to do so was not original in Christian thought with the *CD* – see Chapter VII below and, for example, Basil's attitude to ἀγέννητος, 290-291.

199. *DN* I.2 588C (110:4); and see above, 34-35, notes 90-92.

200. Thus the teaching of his inspired teacher, the mysterious Hierotheos; see *DN* II.9 648AB (133:13-134:6); III.2 681AB (139:17-140:15) and *DN* IV.14-17 713A-D (160:15-162:5); and, for speculation concerning this personage, von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, 153-154.

201. T. F. Torrance, "The relation of the Incarnation to Space in Nicene Theology", *The Ecumenical World of Orthodox Civilization: Essays in Honour of Georges Florovsky* (1974) 46.

202. *DN* I.5 593B (116:8-10).

203. *DN* V.2 816C (181:12-13).

204. *DN* I.5 593D (117:11-13).

205. *DN* I.7 597A (120:5-8).

206. *Ibid.* 596D-597A (120:3-5).

207. See Roques. "Introduction", xxxix, and "Note sur la notion de théologie chez le Ps.-Denys" *RAM* 30 (1954) 269-270. See also *DN* I.1 588AB.

Providence he is also the revelation granted in Scripture. Finally, in the person of Jesus, God has granted us that supreme symbol or “cipher” of himself, the worship of the Church, which is empowered to bring us back to the contemplation of his glory²⁰⁸. The basic tension, applicable to the “symbolical” theology too, is that of the positive and negative, and the continuous dialectic, a simultaneous affirmation and denial, that Dionysius will bring to bear on every name or symbol discussed in the *CD*. To every symbol, that is, except – and we think most significantly – the ἀκριβὴς εἰκὼν of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy²⁰⁹. The dialectic ceases on confronting the Church’s liturgy.

Let us return to the term manifestation, ἐκφάνσις, used above in relation to the creature. We have already encountered it twice, once in reference to the Trinity as “manifestation of the super-essential fecundity”, and once where God as love is described as becoming the “manifestation of himself”²¹⁰. The term appears twice more in contexts relevant to our purpose and both times in parallel with those expressions we have established as denoting God “outside” himself. In Epistle IX, Dionysius speaks generally of the “processions, gifts, manifestations, powers of God”²¹¹, but in *DN II* specifically of the διακρίσεις of the Thearchy (not the Trinity) as signifying its “processions and manifestations”²¹². Following Lossky here, who bases himself in turn on the *Scholia* of John of Scythopolis²¹³, we choose to see a distinction between the usage of “procession” and “manifestation”, the former referring to the divine as cause and the latter to the divine as revealed in the creature. According to Lossky, “the relation between cause and effect is the manifestation: the invisible and secret causes... appear visible and knowable in the effect. God reveals himself in his creatures (θεοφάνεια). The relation between the effect and the cause which determines it is that which is termed participation (μέθεξις) or again, imitation (μίμησις), but in virtue of which the effect becomes the image of the cause”²¹⁴. Later in *DN II* we find a discussion of the relationship of created effects to their causes in God which provides us with a summary of our argument so far: “for there is in the effects no exact likeness [ἀκριβὴς ἐμφάνεια] of the causes, rather the effects have the images [εἰκόνας] of the causes possible to them”²¹⁵. The foundation, then, of the theology of the *DN*, the intelligible names of

208. See, for example, *DN I.8* 597A-C (120:9-121:13), and *CH II.2-5* 136D-145C (10:13-17:2) on Scripture; *CH I.3* (21C-24A [8:14-9:15]) on esp. the Liturgy; and *DN I.4* 592A ff (113:7ff) for Christ.

209. *EH II.2.6* 401C (77:8). See also *I.2* 373B (65:14); *I.4* 376C (67:14); *I.5* 376D (67:20); *V.1.2* 501CD (105:17-21); and *CH VII.2* 241C (35:22-25).

210. *DN I.4* 592A (113:1) and *IV.14* 712C (160:8) respectively.

211. *Ep. IX.1* 1105A (195:2-3).

212. *DN II.2* 640D-641A (126:10-11).

213. *PG IV*, 157.

214. “Théologie négative”, 217.

215. *DN II.8* 645C (132:14-15).

God – as well as of the *CD* generally – lies in that fact that the ἐμφέρεια, that likeness which, however splendid – or lowly²¹⁶ – remains ever inadequate to its prototype. The whole unfolding of the *CD* is at least in greater part to be understood as a sequence of imagery, a study in iconography, having as its continuously present corrective – with the singular and vital exception noted above – the apophaticism of the *MT*. Dionysius' vision of the icon is adumbrated elsewhere, in *DN IX*, in his discussion of the intelligible names of "similar (ὁμοιός)", and "unlike (ἀνόμοιος)", with the first indicating the gift of divine imitation to the creature²¹⁷ and the second stressing God's absolute distance from creation: there "is nothing whatsoever similar to him"²¹⁸. The same chapter finally confirms our argument in its praise of τῶν θεωνυμιῶν ἀγαλμάτων²¹⁹. The intelligible names are notional ἀγάλματα, images, of the divine glory which may direct us to the latter's splendor, which are indeed given us to do so, but which cannot wholly enclose the brightness of the uncreated²²⁰. Saffrey is doubtless correct to direct us to Proclus as a source of this teaching²²¹, but the groundwork for Dionysius' theology here, however much the latter may have seen it converging with the pagan's teaching, had already been laid by Gregory of Nyssa particularly, and the λείψανον of divine fragrance the latter had detected lingering within the high names we give to – and are given by – God²²².

Summary: God's names are sacraments of his presence, and in the notion of sacrament we approach the sense not only of the *DN*, but of Dionysius' vision as a whole. We are still, as noted in our Introduction, only at the periphery of the

216. See *CH* II.1-5 137A-145B (9-17).

217. *DN IX.6* 913D-916A (212:5-8).

218. *DN IX.7* 916A (212:12-15).

219. *DN IX.1* 909B (207:8).

220. See again Torrance, "Relation of the Incarnation to Space", esp. the following from p. 47: "Theological statements operate with essentially open concepts... which, though relatively closed on our side of their reference through the connectedness with the space-time structures of our world, on God's side are wide open to the infinite objectivity... of His divine being... Conceptuality characteristic of theology is one in which our acts of cognition are formed under the pressure of the transcendent reality they intend to know so that the intelligible content of what is disclosed constantly bursts through the forms we bring to it in order to grasp it". Thus, for Dionysius, we have the *MT*.

221. "Nouveau liens objectifs entre le Ps.-Denys et Proclus" *RSPT* 63 (1979) esp. 3-9. His reference is to *Théol. Plat.* vol. I.129, 123-125, for Proclus and the names as ἀγάλματα. While acknowledging the dependence on Proclus, it still seems clear to us that Dionysius uses the word, ἄγαλμα, throughout his works as simply a synonym for εἰκών, σύμβολον, τύπος, etc. In *CH* II.5 145A he refers to the ἀγάλματα of scriptures; in III.2 165A the members of the hierarchy are ἀγάλματα of the divine light; in *EH* II.3.3 1428D the ἀγάλματα refer to the movements of the bishop; in IV.3.1 473B it is the rite of the μύρον that is an ἄγαλμα of divine beauty and, 476A, of the divine fragrance.

222. See Chapter VII below, 297 and note 104.

Incarnation. Concerning the *DN* itself, we find it is a Christian's re-working of pagan philosophy, in light of God's revelation in Christ and of prior Christian tradition, that fundamentally alters, or redirects, the thrust of pagan Neoplatonist teaching. The intelligible names are not things, no longer have reference to objectively and independently existing entities, but are instead windows opening onto the sense – and reality – of God present in his powers or energies. While it may be the case that the particular icons or echoes of his “out-passing” considered in the *DN* are often rather less the result of Scriptural revelation and more of the philosophical reflections of pagan antiquity than Dionysius would have us – and perhaps himself – believe²²³, still the point seems to be clear: they direct us to, and participate in, the greater sacrament, *μυστήριον*, of God's self-giving love. The key to all the *CD* is the nature and all-predominance of that one divine love. It is God himself who gives himself, opens himself to participation, enables the same in his creatures, and so leads them back to himself. The divine names are one case in particular of that cycle of grace. The participation they grant is real, for God is truly present in his processions, though at the same time they can but direct us further into the depths of his being. We find ourselves thus having completed the first stage of our journey into Dionysius' vision of divine-human relations at whose core is the new *θεανδρική ἐνέργεια* given us through and in Christ. Our next stage will be, in the chapter following, the consideration of the reason-endowed creature as at once participant and image of the divine Providence and then, in Chapter III, of the living worlds of angels and humans as called upon both to reflect the light of the divine energies – of God's love – and thus to conduct their several members back and up to the encounter with their creator. We shall thus be moving increasingly towards Jesus as the center and fulfillment of divine Providence, the point where the worlds meet and whence they – and with them all the treatises of the *CD* – derive their sense and coherence.

223. But he can and does find justification for all of them in scripture. See, for example, Rorem, “The Biblical Allusions and Overlooked Quotations in the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus” *SP* 23 (1989) 61-65, on the range and omnipresence of scripture in Dionysius.

CHAPTER II

THE MYSTERY OF THE CREATURE: TOWARD THE DIVINE LIKENESS AND UNION

Introduction: Let us recall the questions we posed early in the last chapter. If God is forever transcendent how is he then manifested? How are the δυνάμεις participated in by created beings? Where and what is the point of, as it were, intersection between Creator and created? How is it that the creature realizes first of all the reflection of God and Providence and, secondly, how is it given to apprehend and appropriate to itself the knowledge and activity of the uncreated energies? What, finally, is the sense of the creaturely ἔκστασις and in what manner is it of a piece with the whole shape of Dionysius' thought concerning the mutual relations and communion of God with the world? In this chapter we shall take a number of the key terms discussed in Chapter I – specifically κίνησις, στάσις, ἔρως, δύναμις, ἐνέργεια, πρόοδος, πρόνοια, ἔκστασις, and ἔνωσις – and see how they are used in reference to the reason-endowed creation, angels and humans, as each of them is individually a potential icon of God and called to union with him. We shall then, in Chapters III and IV, be in a position to consider the created world collectively in the hierarchies – the God-intended world(s) of creation – as both the reflection of God in procession and the ladder of ascents given for our assimilation into participation in his life, i.e., as at once the image of his πρόοδος and the reality of his ἐπιστροφή working our return to him. The last will lead us, in Chapter IV, to our discussion of Christ in his Church as God's supreme μυστήριον. The movement of our thought, one which we believe to be as well Dionysius' own, will thus be always toward the Incarnation, as toward that point where the tensions basic to the *CD* – manifest/unmanifest¹, exodus/return, icon/archetype, motion/repose, knowing/unknowing, etc. – discover their re-solution, coherence, and highest expression.

These tensions are both basic and deliberate. They are not, however, without certain ambiguities. The πρόοδος/ἐπιστροφή language underlying all the *CD* leads us to at least two serious questions concerning the nature of the Dionysian vision.

1. See von Balthasar's remarks, *Herrlichkeit*: "As *manifestation* of the unmanifest, God's movement is *proodos*, and as manifestation of the *unmanifest*... *epistrophe*", 167 (italics in original).

There is first the notion of creation itself. We must ask if Dionysius truly teaches this doctrine rather than the automatic or unconscious emanationism usually associated with Neoplatonism². Secondly, the cyclic thrust of these two terms calls to mind the timeless round of the pagans' cosmos wherein, for Plotinus as well as for his successors, something very like the Indians' *karma* dictates the perpetual reincarnation of the soul³. Regarding the first question we shall argue that, while Dionysius' creationism represents perhaps the most ambiguous feature of his thought, the *CD* is scarcely so distant from received Christian orthodoxy as some would have it. It speaks instead fundamentally of the mystery of God's love. That mystery, and the tensions which are inseparable from it, also serve to shatter the pagans' static and layered ontology⁴. God's loving will, or λόγος, for each creature is reflected in the latter's ἀναλογία i.e., as the intended reflection of the divine the creature strives ever to become what, in a sense, it is already in God. The tension or "gap" between the divine will to communicate itself and the creature's to appropriate that gift determines Dionysius' understanding of creation. He has, we argue, followed here the lines laid down over a century before him by Gregory of Nyssa and broken entirely with the philosophers' closed system. Both "ends" of his cycles meet in God the infinite. The result is a dynamism or stress on motion, foreign to the pagans, as a progress or ascent into God that can have no end. The way is thus opened for an absolute value to be accorded the individual soul, time, and so to history. This in turn allows for the revelation of God in Jesus and thus in Christ's body, the Church⁵.

We turn now to the following consideration a 1) God the Creator; 2) the creature as individually the analogue and intended mirror of Providence, and 3) the meaning of the creature's ἔκστασις and ἔνωσις with its Creator.

A. GOD THE CREATOR

1. Emanationism?

In an article on creation versus emanationism in Gregory of Nyssa⁶, H. A. Wolfson sets out the following three points of distinction between pagan and Christian ideas: 1) emanation is from God – i.e. his substance – while creation is from nothing; 2) emanationism is an eternal process but creation is in time; 3)

2. Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 192-236, esp. 233-236.

3. For Plotinus, see *Enn.* IV.3.16 (also IV.2.1 and 4.16); for Iamblichus, Dillon, *Iamblich*, 28-29; and for Proclus, *Elements*, propositions 206 (esp.) and 211 (Dodds) 181 and 185, together with Dodd's commentary, 304-305 and 309-310 respectively, and Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 192-239, esp. 219-239.

4. vs. Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 29-77, esp. 72-77.

5. See the article by Armstrong, "Salvation Plotinian and Christian" *DRev* 75 (1957) esp. 136-139 on the Church and community as a particularly Christian, non-Plotinian development.

6. H. A. Wolfson, "The Identification of *Ex Nihilo* with Emanation in Gregory of Nyssa" *HTR* 63 (1970) 53-60 (for our citation, 54-55).

emanationism occurs by nature whereas creation comes to be by God's will. We must admit straightaway that if these criteria are to be accepted without qualification as absolute standards, then our defense of the *CD* will be hard-pressed indeed. Brons has noted the lack of any mention by Dionysius of the ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων⁷, and also that the traditionally Christian language of κτίζω-κτίστης appears only in direct quotations from Scripture⁸. The same scholar then points to the essentially metaphysical – therefore pagan – αἴτιος-αἰτιατά vocabulary of the *CD*, particularly as the expression of a timeless Providence signifying the totality of God in relation, as the real Dionysian teaching however “cosmetically” retouched with Christian phrases⁹. We would, for our part, also add such texts as *DN* IV.1, where Dionysius uses the image of the sun, οὐ λογιζόμενος ἢ προαιρούμενος, as a type (οὕτω) of the Good sending forth its “rays”¹⁰. Elsewhere he refers to Providence as ἄναρχος and ἀτελεύτητος¹¹. Similarly, we hear of the “eternal circle [ἀίδιος κύκλος]” of divine love¹², and of beings sharing in God's gift of Being as the radii share in the monad of the circle's center¹³. Finally, Dionysius tells us that the divine love οὐκ εἶασεν αὐτὸν ἄγονον ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένειν, but came forth instead into creation¹⁴. Inasmuch as he uses the divine “fertility” elsewhere in reference to the Trinity¹⁵, this statement, together with the γόνιμος στάσις of *DN* IX.9¹⁶ and the “overflowing” of God's εἰρηνικῆς γονιμότητος in XI.3¹⁷, seems to indicate a want of the distinction between nature and will in God which, for example, Georges Florovsky understands as fundamental to the creation theology of Christian patristic literature¹⁸. On all three of Wolfson's counts, therefore, Dionysius appears to fail.

While granting the difficulties it poses for its defenders, we do not think the question of creationism versus emanationism in the *CD* can be quite so simply reduced and answered. Indeed, with the exception of an eternal world¹⁹, this reservation applies even to the pagans themselves. We pointed in the previous

7. *Gott u.S.*, 193-194.

8. *Ibid.* 196.

9. *Ibid.* 183-202, 222-231, and, for a convenient summary, the article “Πρόνοια”, 178-180.

10. *DN* IV.1 693B (144:5); see also IV.4 697B-700C (147:2-148:11) for the analogy with the sun.

11. *Ep.* IX.3 1109B (202:2).

12. *DN* IV.14 712D (160:13).

13. *DN* V.6 821A (185:4-11).

14. *DN* IV.10 708B (155:18-19).

15. See above, Chapter 1, 54, note 73.

16. *DN* IX.9 916D (213:17).

17. *DN* IX.2 952A (219:23).

18. Georges Florovsky, “The Idea of Creation in Christian Philosophy” *ECQ* 8 (1949), esp. 54-55 and 66-67. See also his “The Concept of Creation in St. Athanasius” *SP* 6 (1962) esp. 54.

19. See, for example, *Enn.* II.9.3 and II.9.7 as a position which holds as well for Plotinus' successors.

chapter to some of the difficulties involved in applying the emanationist metaphor *tout court* to the Neoplatonists' transcendent One and the universe that derives, somehow, from it. The same may be said concerning, specifically, the points bearing on will versus necessity and on the world as drawn from God's substance²⁰. Regarding the first, it is true that Plotinus and Proclus both speak of creation as a "by-product (παράκοιούθημα)" of divine contemplation²¹ and not the result of will – of its nature the Good *must* produce²². Yet Plotinus uses the verb ποιέω on four occasions in reference to the One²³. He also denies the distinction, as applied to God, between will and essential being²⁴. The action of creation, as Rist notes, "seems finally to be wholly mysterious"²⁵. Turning to the world as of God's substance and again taking Plotinus as our exemplar, we do indeed find the lower levels described as an "issuance [ἐξίτηλον]" of the higher²⁶, or as a radiation or a circumambience of their source²⁷. Yet he refuses to identify the One in any way with the world²⁸. The undiminished and unmoved quality of the cause, which Proclus emphasizes as well²⁹, takes away, as Armstrong observes, "any question of emanation. What is left is simply an omnipresence of the spiritual"³⁰. Thus, again in agreement with the latter scholar³¹, it appears that even with the pagans there is a certain definite quality of "grace" or "gift" attaching to the world's origins.

Once more it appears that Dionysius has set out to seize upon and exploit areas of convergence with Christian doctrine. Let us, then, take up each of Wolfson's points. With regard to the "of God" rather than *ex nihilo*³², we recall our point in Chapter I that Dionysius' προόδοι are not, as with the pagans, synonymous with the next level of existence down the scale of being. God as Providence, in his processions, "is given to every thing which is, while yet transcending [ὑπερέχουσα] the participations [μετουσίαι]"³³. The "transcending" here

20. For the latter point esp., see the article by H. Dörries, "Emanation, Ein unphilosophisches Wort in spätantiken Denken", in *Parousia: Festgabe für Hirschberger* (1965) 119-141.

21. Dodds, *Elements*, 290, citing both Plotinus, *Enn.* II.8.4 and Proclus, *In Parm.* 791:14.

22. *Enn.* II.9.3 and 8, and IV.8.6.

23. All are found in *Enn.* VI.8.19.

24. *Enn.* VI.8.13.

25. Rist, *Road to Reality*, 26-27.

26. *Enn.* III.8.5 and V.1.6; see also Proclus, *Elements*, propositions 7 and 25, 8 and 28, together with Dodds' commentary, 193-194.

27. *Enn.* V.1.6; also V.3.10.

28. See esp. *Enn.* V.3.11 where Plotinus denies even immanence to the One.

29. See *Elements*, propositions 26-27, 30-32, and Dodds, 213-214.

30. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (1940) 60. For similar sentiments concerning Iamblichus, see Larsen, *Jamblique*, 177f.

31. Armstrong, "Salvation Plotinian and Christian", esp. 130-131.

32. Much stressed by Bruns, *Gott u.S.*, 193ff.

33. *DN* II.9.649B (135:15).

must be insisted upon. It is true that the Good is said both to bring all things into being and to leave nothing without some trace of itself³⁴. "There are", as Lossky writes, "as many providences as there are beings"³⁵ – a point, incidentally that also serves to set Dionysius apart from, at least, Plotinus³⁶. Yet the nature of this relationship or link with each creature, while not without some ambiguity, does not diminish the fact that God ἐν ἑκστάσει is still God. That linkage which Dionysius expresses with such Platonist commonplaces as μετουσία, μετέχειν, ἐπιτηδεύειν, etc., expresses indeed a certain "intimacy"³⁷ between the Creator and his creation. It does not, though, signify for our author, as it does for example with Plotinus, that the creature is already and eternally made, a complete and fully accomplished microcosmos covering all the spectra of reality³⁸. Instead, as we shall see³⁹, the microcosm that is the creature both requires community and awaits fulfillment. The κοινωνία to which Dionysius refers in the terms just cited opens onto the, for him, allied expressions of θεοειδής, θεομίμησις, and ἀπομοιώσις, i.e., precisely onto motion or ascent. In other words, the Areopagite's creature is not a "piece of God", a "being", but is rather contingent, fully a creature, having only a power to be or to become and without any stability save in God⁴⁰ – or, better, save in ever-moving into God. The language of "participation" thus signifies neither a hidden monism nor a timeless *Verhältnis*⁴¹, but instead a certain double and mysterious – in the broadly sacramental sense – aspect of creaturely being: created being truly shares in divinity while remaining radically other. Like the notional icons of the divine names, the creature itself is at once like, and a revelation of, God, while at the same time permanently "inadequate" to him. On the side of the Creator, transcendence is therefore maintained – in fact it is essential – and the ex nihilo, if not clearly stated, must surely be assumed.

Secondly, we have Wolfson's "creation is in time". Here we look first to Dionysius' discussion of time and eternity (αἰών) in *DN* X.3⁴². Even Florovsky can admit of creation that it is a "contingent eternity"⁴³. We believe this expression speaks as well for Dionysius' own view. Not only does the latter argue for God as

34. See *DN* IV.20 717D-720A (165:17-166:3) and IV.28 729A (174:8-13) on matter.

35. Lossky, "La Notion des 'Analogies,'" 284-285; see also *DN* IV.33 733B.

36. For Plotinus, there are no 'personal' Providences; see Armstrong, "Salvation", 128-129. Note, however, that the power of ἐπιστροφή is a kind of given or grace: *Ibid.* and *Enn.* VI.7.31.

37. The expression is von Balthasar's, *Herrlichkeit*, 173.

38. See esp. *Enn.* III.4.3: ἕκαστος κόσμος νοητός and ff. as a key to Plotinus' system and essential to his development of the soul's solitary return to the One. See also Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* Vol I (1929) 202-203, together with *Enn.* IV.4.23 and Moreau, "L'idée du monde", 49-50.

39. See below on ἀναλογία, κίνησις, and δύναμις.

40. See Armstrong, "Salvation", 133-134.

41. Bruns' view, *Gott u.S.*, 195.

42. *DN* X.3 937C-940A (216-217).

43. Florovsky, "The Idea of Creation", 67.

source or cause of χρόνος and αἰών, as himself πρὸ αἰῶνος, but he is also careful to point out clearly that while angels, the first rank of creation, may be called eternal, theirs in no way is an eternity comparable to the Creator's: οὐκ ἀπλῶς συναῖδια Θεῷ τῷ πρὸ αἰῶνος οἰεσθαι τὰ αἰώνια λεγόμενα⁴⁴. There is, granted, no mention in the *CD* of a "time" when creation was not. But on reflection, how could there be? Both time and αἰών are properly measures of created being. To speak of a creation "in time" seems then logically to place God within time, on a level with the creature. If, though, there is no time or "moment" for his creating, then there is in the *CD* certainly a kind of "before:" "God knows the angels before they come to be"⁴⁵. Further, there are at least two occasions when the verb παράγω is used in the past tense, in the *CH*: "on account of goodness the super-essential divinity, having established the essences of all, brought them into being",⁴⁶ and in *Ep. VIII*, where it is Christ who "makes all things to be and brought [παρήγαγεν] everything into being".⁴⁷ We recall also the divine love that "did not suffer [εἰσεν]" to remain in itself, but "moved itself [ἐκίνησε αὐτόν]" to create⁴⁸. It would thus appear that Dionysius, in so pointing to a *definite divine act*, is here as well at least "susceptible" to an orthodox interpretation.

The last quotation above brings us back to the third and most difficult issue, that of agency or will in God's creating – or, rather, since it is at least clear that God alone is the agent in the *CD*⁴⁹, of will versus necessity. It may be best to begin by asking what exactly Dionysius is referring to in his "automatic" imagery of light, sun, overflowing, goodness, and so forth. Now it appears clear, to us at least, that the subject of these metaphors is the mystery of God's superabundant love⁵⁰. His goodness (ἀγαθότης), as Dionysius tells us expressly, means his love: God "loves [ἐρᾷ]" all and *is* love. This love which is God in turn moves, must move, to the giving of itself. Does the "must" here involve a necessity that is in contradiction to God's freedom, his will? Let us first recall that element of mystery which even the pagans, particularly Plotinus, had understood as underlying the whole discussion of the creation or derivation of the world from God. That element is certainly no less pronounced in Dionysius, and, surely, his notion of its being rooted in the overflowing of God's love must be taken as both fundamentally Christian in inspiration, and, moreover, fully in accord with, and pointing toward, the supreme act and mystery subsequent to creation, the Incarnation: "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16). Secondly, and still in reference to "mystery", we must keep in mind, as surely Dionysius must have done, the inadequacy of all

44. *DN* X.3 940A (216:16-17).

45. *DN* VII.2 869A (196:14-15), πρὶν ἀγγέλους γενέσθαι εἰδώς καὶ παράγων ἀγγέλους.

46. "ἀγαθότητι πάσας ἢ ὑπερουσίως θεαρχία τὰς τῶν ὅλων οὐσίας ὑποστήσασα πρὸς τὸ εἶναι παρήγαγεν", *CH* IV.1 177C (20.9-11).

47. *Ep. VIII*.1 1085D (174:1).

48. *DN* IV.10 708B (155:18).

49. Admitted by Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 189.

50. *DN* IV.10 708AB (155.14-20).

human-based distinctions such as, exactly, that between will and necessity. As this point the words of a modern Roman Catholic theologian may shed some light on the apparent difficulty posed by such metaphors as the “sun” imagery, and phrases as the οὐ λογιζόμενος ἢ προαιρούμενος cited above: “God is not, if we are to speak properly, free to *choose*. To conceive of him as presented with alternatives offering themselves to him... ‘possible worlds’... is anthropomorphic. God’s plan for creation is what it is because he is who he is. This is freedom in the fullest, most positive sense where it *coincides* with necessity in the fullest, most positive sense... God is super-generous love. The question of his *not* creating does not arise”.⁵¹ Now, while it may be argued that both Dom Iltyd and Dionysius are somewhat incautious with respect to the issue of creation versus emanation⁵², or freedom versus necessity, it should be equally admitted that 1) they are both theologian-philosophers caught in the toils of a rationally insoluble difficulty, and 2) that their common vision of the divine love “bursting forth” into the creation of the worlds must (if we are not to slip into slander) be read as the fruit of Christian inspiration and the Revelation. Theirs is a real feeling, in other words, for the living God of Christian faith rather than the vaguely Christianized poeticizing or tinting of an essentially pagan insistence on the priority of metaphysics. Once again, therefore, we find Wolfson’s dichotomy over-simple, and hence deceptive.

This is not to say, however, that there is nothing whatever to the distinction between will and nature. We have already noted that Dionysius does distinguish between God’s essence and “powers”, and, further, that he places the act of creation in the latter: God in relation is God in his πρόοδοι. Neither are specific expressions of God’s will wholly lacking in the CD. We find the terms βούλησις, βούλομαι and θέλημα used seven times directly in reference to God. The divine βούλησις for the salvation of humanity is shared by all three Persons of the Trinity⁵³ God’s θέλημα is, in fact, the λογική σωτηρία of both people and angels⁵⁴. He creates all things and “wills [βούλεται] that they draw near to him and share in him”⁵⁵. He enlightens the angels as to his βούλησις⁵⁶. While he did not will (ἡβουλήθη – note again the tense) to create evil⁵⁷, he still left us free to know his will (θέλημα) and not to do it⁵⁸. We note that God’s will or willing here is in every case clearly associated with his goodness, that is, his love acting on and for his creation. It is both personal and dynamic, in which two adjectives we discover at

51. Dom Iltyd Trethowan, “Irrationality in Theology and the Palamite Distinction” *ECR* 10 (1977) 21. Emphasis added.

52. Thus see Gersh’s remarks on Dionysius, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 217 and 227.

53. *DN* II.6 644c (130:8-9).

54. *EH* I.3 373D (66:10-11).

55. “γενέσθαι παραπλήσια αὐτῷ καὶ κοινωνικά τοῦ αὐτοῦ”, *Ep.* VIII.1 1085D (174:2); see also *CH* IV.1 177C (20:12).

56. *EH* I.4 376B (67:4).

57. *DN* IV.118 716A (163:2).

58. *DN* IV.35 736A (179:7).

once the Creator of Christian Revelation and, in summary, the argument of this chapter.

2. The divine λόγοι

Dionysius uses two terms in particular to describe the polarity, yet real intersection – “intimacy” – between Creator and created, λόγος and ἀναλογία. Their mutual relation and tension provide the moving force of his system’s dynamism. The most important statement regarding the λόγοι comes within his definition of the divine paradigms:

And we say that the paradigms are the essence-creating *logoi* of all things which pre-subsist unitedly in God, which Scripture calls fore-ordinations, and divine and good wills, the generative causes [ποιητικά] and definitions of beings according to which the super-essential [God] has fore-ordained and brought all things into existence⁵⁹.

The use here of the λόγοι as equivalent to the παραδείγματα – and therewith also to the αἰτίαι, ἀρχαί and like terms for the divine origins of the creature⁶⁰ – as well as to the divine will(s) – is surely of great significance. Hathaway is doubtless correct to see in Dionysius’ λόγος the nature (φύσις) of a given creature⁶¹, but as certainly incorrect to see its derivation coming solely from Proclus. For the latter the term, λόγος, serves merely to signify the relations of causes to their effects and so provides the “glue” for his triads⁶². Dionysius’ λόγοι, on the other hand, are not “mean terms”, but are of God, “supra-mundane”⁶³. They are the divine models of all things, precisely the paradigms. The notion of divine exemplars, however, does give rise to certain questions. It may suggest static thoughts, ideas within God’s essence and so, relatedly, imply a necessary relationship between him and his creature. When taken together with προορισμός, it could also indicate an element of predestinationism. We shall look briefly at each of these questions.

The term παράδειγμα, in the sense of divine exemplar, is used only once outside of the text cited above. In DN VII, Dionysius states that our positive knowledge of God derives from the order (διάταξις) of his creation, insofar as the latter bears certain “likenesses [ὁμοιωματα]” of the paradigms. God in himself, however, abides beyond all knowing (ἐπέκεινα πάντων)⁶⁴. This statement must, of

59. “Παραδείγματα δὲ φάμεν εἶναι τοὺς ἐν Θεῷ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιοποιούς καὶ ἐνιαίως προϋφειστώτας λόγους, οὓς ἡ θεολογία προορισμοὺς καλεῖ καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα, τῶν ὄντων ἀφοριστικά καὶ ποιητικά, καθ’ οὓς ὁ ὑπερούσιος τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν”. DN V.8 824C (188:6-10).

60. See Brons, *Gott* u.s., 144f, as well as DN V.5 820B (184:6-7).

61. Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, 46-47; so see DN IV.26 728C (173:10-11) and V.7 821B (185:22), esp. the former for the λόγος as referring to the creature’s φύσις.

62. See *Elements*, propositions 21, 23, and 24, 24-18, and Rosán, *Proclus*, 157.

63. CH XI.2 284D (42:1).

64. DN VII.3 869D-872A (197:22-198:1); also VII.1 865B (193:5-9). For the Good as παράδειγματικόν, see also IV.7 704A (152:6) and IV.10 705D (155:1).

course, recall our argument in Chapter I above: our knowledge of God is obtained uniquely of and through his energies which provide the ground for the "sacramental" presence carried somehow in his "names". The connection, or rather identity, between the "models" of the world and the "creative power of God realizing itself in creation" is rendered specific by Dionysius' identification of the former with the λόγοι⁶⁵. Furthermore, and just as with the δυνάμεις, although the λόγοι discover their origin in the hidden super-essence, they must be ascribed in their actuality to the οὐσιοποιὸς πρόοδος whence all derive and in which all participate⁶⁶. God's creative ἐκβάσις is in fact mentioned in the sentence immediately preceding the definition of the παραδείγματα in DN V.8. The λόγοι-παραδείγματα are therefore proper to the divine energies rather than to the essence⁶⁷. Gathered or held within the one Providence, we may identify them with the "specific providences" mentioned in the preceding section. The equation λόγοι = δυνάμεις = πρόνοιαι is unmistakable and deliberate.

As for a "necessary relationship", the ambiguity is surely no less – and no greater – here than in our discussion above of will versus necessity in God. In identifying the λόγοι further with the divine θελήματα, Dionysius is clearly drawing attention to the volitional, and thus personal, character of God's relationship with his world. He is also as clearly "rejecting... the non-deliberative emanative process which pagan Neoplatonist philosophers... had made fundamental to their thought"⁶⁸. God's "models" for the world are in fact his wills, his intentions or purposes, for each of his creatures.

Concerning the divine will, we have already seen that it may be known, but not necessarily obeyed. The λόγος of each being is, as it were, the closest approach of the Creator to the created. It is the given creature as it is intended or willed to become by God's creating love. Yet, as Florovsky points out, to see these προορισμοί as inescapable laws of nature is dangerously mistaken⁶⁹. The

65. See the article by Beierwaltes, "Johannes von Skythopolis und Plotin" *TU* 108 (1972) 5, which we take as opposed to the too-easy contrast Sherwood draws between Maximus and Dionysius on the λόγοι, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor* (1955) 176.

66. DN V.9 825A (188:18); see also DN I.4 592D (115:9-10) for the "super-essential ray" holding in itself all things. For comment, see Lossky, "Analogies", 285.

67. This is opposed to the contrast Thunberg draws between Maximus and Dionysius in *Microcosm and Mediator*, 79 and 81. Generally, much of what Thunberg has to say concerning Maximus' dynamis as revealed in his doctrine (76-83, and more broadly, 63-97) he rightly applies to Dionysius, save the issue above. On the λόγοι, we might look as well both to the long Christian background of the term (thus see our discussion on Origen in Chapter VI below, 269-271, as well as A. Aall, *Geschichte der Logos Idee in der Griechischen Literature* 2 vols. [1896], esp. Vol. I, 394-450), and to Plotinus whose "formative forces" are much more akin to Dionysius' λόγοι than Proclus' use of the term (see *Enn.* III.2.15; III.8.2; and V.1.6; as well as Armstrong, *Plotinus* [1953] 35).

68. Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 265, with, however, the ambiguities in the pagans themselves that we have already noted.

69. Florovsky, "Idea of Creation", 74.

same love that ordains our being calls us to itself, wills our communion, but this call may be refused. Dionysius' whole argument elsewhere concerning the nature of evil becomes inexplicable unless this refusal is understood as possible⁷⁰. Evil does not find its cause in any λόγος or δύναμις, but rather in the impotence or illness of the rational creature's own will⁷¹. The λόγοι are thus "predestinations" only, as it were, to beatitude⁷². They in no way include a foreordained fall or damnation. The latter remains the creature's responsibility. It follows that the divine will with regard to each may not be readily apparent in the actual state of any given creature – effectively, of any given human soul – a corollary which has certain repercussions that we shall note when considering the nature of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy⁷³. The λόγοι are therefore our personal and foreordained vocations to which we may or may not choose to become conformed, or better – since they remain transcendent by virtue of their source in God⁷⁴ – to which we may choose to be ever in process of becoming conformed in order thus to share, as it were, in the eternal process of our own creation⁷⁵.

At the same time present in each, yet divine and transcendent, the λόγοι thus constitute at once: 1) the creative and originating causes of each being; 2) the closest approach of God to creation and therefore the objects of our contemplation;⁷⁶ and 3) through that same contemplation, the powers gathering the created mind up and towards its foreordained end (τέλος), i.e., the final causes drawing each toward its proper degree of participation in the imparticipable God.

B. THE REASON-ENDOWED CREATURE AS THE MIRROR OR ANALOG OF GOD'S ENERGIES

1. "Proper degree:" the creature's ἀναλογία

The other half of the polarity we spoke of above, the presence as it were of its λόγος within the creature, Dionysius expresses chiefly through the use of the term ἀναλογία. It is, however, true that the two terms do occasionally overlap. In DN IV, for example, Dionysius compares the sun's giving "light to all who are capable, in accord with their λόγος for sharing in its light", with the Good's granting of "its rays to all according to their measure [ἀναλόγως]"⁷⁷. Elsewhere, again, he describes σωτηρία as the divine power "preserving all without battle or conflict, ordered according to the λόγοι proper to each... and establishing the

70. DN IV, 18-35 713D-736A (162-179).

71. DN IV, 31 732B (176, 10-11) and IV, 35 733D-736A (179:5-13).

72. See our discussion on the divine θεσμός in Chapter III below, 124-127.

73. See Chapter III below, 134, and esp. Chapter IV, 208-214 and 218-219.

74. For example, DN II.8 645C (132:15-17): "τὰ αἴτια τῶν αἰτιατῶν ἐξήρηται καὶ ὑπερ-ἰδρυτα κατὰ τὸν τῆς οἰκείας ἀρχῆς λόγον".

75. Florovsky, "The Idea of Creation", 74.

76. See von Semmelroth, "Geeinte Vielheit", 395-396, in relation to DN VII.3 869D-872A (197-198) and MT 1.3 1000D-1001A (144) on the λόγοι as associated with the τόπος Θεοῦ; also Völker, *Kontemplation*, 179.

77. DN IV, 1 693B (144:5).

ἀναλογίαι of each without their suffering transformation into their opposites"⁷⁸. Overlapping, perhaps, but they are not quite synonymous. While the ἀναλογίαι may be seen as occasionally equivalent to the divine wills as paradigms⁷⁹, they are, as is clear even from the quotations above, primarily referred to the creature. They are the very "friction point", or contact between God and creation, whence may derive the slight ambiguity attaching to them. The ambivalence is still undeniable. We miss, for example, Gregory of Nyssa's clear statement that the creature represents in a sense God's concretized immanence, his hypostatized will⁸⁰. Nonetheless, it still appears to us that the Nyssene's remark offers the most reasonable access into the Dionysian term. God gives to each "according to measure;" he establishes and maintains as unconfused the varied ἀναλογίαι⁸¹ or "proportions" of created beings. A creature's ἀναλογία is thus the "measure" of its share in the Creator – literally, according to its λόγος (ἀνά + λόγον). Here we arrive at the "friction point", or tension, that sets Dionysius' use of the term apart from his pagan contemporaries, especially Proclus. Unlike the latter's ἀναλογία⁸², Dionysius' does not denote what is in fact something already accomplished. Our likeness to God, our ἐπιστροφή, is not now fully achieved. Rather, in as much as ἀναλογία means the capacity or potential of each for God⁸³, that in us which is capable of and open to the answering of God's "word" to us – our personal *capax Dei* – it necessarily opens onto movement. It denotes not so much what the creature has or is at any one time, but rather what it is willed to become, the level of contemplation – and thus of both activity and being – that it is called upon to realize⁸⁴.

78. "Πάντα φρουροῦσαν ἄμαχα καὶ ἀπολέμητα τοῖς ἑαυτῶν ἑκάστα λόγοις... καὶ τὰς ἀναλογίας ἑκάστου συνιστάνουσιν ἀμεταπτῶτους εἰς τὰ ἐναντία". DN VIII.9 897A (206:4-7).

79. See Lossky, "Analogies", 299-305 and 308. For a view opposed to the ἀναλογία - λόγος overlap, see however von Semmelroth, "Geeinte Vielheit", 397ff.

80. For the citation and text, see Chapter VII below, 295 and note 83, as well as Koch, *Beziehungen*, 194.

81. The "variety" is particularly important for Dionysius' notion of a non-uniform creation. See Völker, *Kontemplation*, 162, and our Chapters III and VI below, 122-130, and 274-277, 282 respectively. The variety, though, need not conflict with the infinite ascent.

82. For Proclus on ἀναλογία, see *Elements*, esp. propositions 125, 31-32 (for ἐπιστροφή as already in a sense accomplished) and 195-196, pages 111-113, 34-36, and 168-171 respectively. For commentary, see Dodds, *Ibid.* 218-219 and 299-300; Gersh, *Κίνησις*, 83-89; and Rosán, *Proclus*, 74-75. The latter scholars, in particular, note the "return" as already fully present. Thus, for the soul as a complete microcosm, see propositions 192 and 195, 169-171, together with our note 39 above. For ἀναλογία in Iamblichus, see Larsen, *Jamblique*, 448.

83. See, for example, EH VI.3.6 537C (120:11-12): ἀναλόγως αὐταῖς ἐλλάμπεσθαι [i.e., orders of the hierarchy] τὰς φανωτάτας τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀκτίνος αὐγᾶς, and also DN I.1 588A (109:3) and I.4 592B (114:1-2).

84. Von Semmelroth, "Συμβολικὴ θεολογία", 6. See DN IV.2 696C (145:14-15); our souls are led up (ἀνάγεσθαι) by angelic guidance ἐπὶ τὴν πάντων ἀγαθῶν ἀγαθαρχίαν... καὶ τῶν ἐκεῖθεν ἐκβλύζομένων ἐλλάμψεων ἐν μετουσίᾳ γενέσθαι κατὰ τὴν σφῶν ἀναλογίαν.

The term thus embraces the whole of creaturely being and, furthermore, does so not as a given, static fact, but as a process. The division of every creature into οὐσία, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, “in accordance with the heavenly λόγος which concerns them”⁸⁵, is to be read as three aspects of a single and simultaneous – though not compulsive – evolution. Dionysius elsewhere defines the perfection, τελείωσις, of each created intelligence as being led up [ἀναχθῆναι] to the imitation of God in accordance with its proper degree [ἀναλογία]⁸⁶. The degree, analogy, of each is then to be read as comprehending all three of the categories of creaturely being: οὐσία as the expression of the being’s creating λόγος, i.e., the sum of its characteristics and ground of being as willed by God; δύναμις as declaring that capacity or potential in the creature for the realization of its ordained degree of participation in God; and ἐνέργεια as finally the eternal process itself of that accomplishment. “Eternal realization” leads us to our consideration of motion and repose.

a) Στάσις : ever-moving repose

We touch here on a point of crucial importance for Dionysius. That each creature finds its perfection through participating in God “according to its own degree” implies a structure and tiered universe wherein there is a place for everything, and each is called to its proper place. Within the place foreordained by God, in so far as that place expresses its God-intended reality – λόγος – the creature is to discover its τέλος: to become in its own right and foreordained manner the imitator of God (θεομίμητος), “God’s co-worker [Θεοῦ συνεργόν γενέσθαι]”⁸⁷. This is to say that ἀναλογία, according to Dionysius, signifies that each creature – especially each reason-endowed being – is intended to become the reflection of the Godhead as the latter relates to the world, i.e., of Providence: “to

Note also *DN* IV.5 701A (149:19-20). Dionysius’ entering into (γενέσθαι), being received or called into, participation (μετουσία) is clearly an important point. The term for the Neoplatonists denotes something already present and, if imperfect, then forever so – for example, Proclus, *Elements*, prop. 143, 127. For Christian writers, however, “it is seldom used of a thing’s relationship to its constituent form or substance; it is commonly contrasted with οὐσία, and indicates a state or condition, or the fact of enjoying it... a gift, not by nature”, Stead, *Divine Substance* (1977) 141. Thus we may understand Dionysius’ μετουσία in *CH* IV.2 180A (21:3); VII.4 212A (31:16); X.3 273C (41:4); *EH* III.3.14 445A (94:1); and IV.3.3 476D (97:26). God “receives [εἰσδέχεται]” us into it in *EH* II.3.4 400C (75:22); “establishes [καταστήσασα]” us in it by virtue of Christ in *EH* III.3.7 436C (88:4); and, through Jesus, calls us (καλοῦν) to “participation in himself” in *EH* III.3.13 444C (93:20).

85. *CH* XI.2 284D (41:22-42:1).

86. *CH* III.2 165B (18:15). See note 89 below.

87. *Ibid.* For other references to the important term, συνεργία, see *CH* III.3 168A (19:22); VII.4 212A (31:13) where it is coupled with κοινωνία in God; and *EH* II.2.4 393C (71:5) where it is allied with συνεόρτασις. Relatedly, humankind is called to become the angels’ “concelebrant [συλλαειτουργός]”, *CH* I.3 124A (9:9), and through Christ, their co-workers: αὐτοῖς τὰ θεία κατὰ δύναμιν συνεργήσωμεν, *DN* XI.5 953A (221:7).

show forth the divine ἐνέργεια in oneself according to one's capacity for showing it forth"⁸⁸. Becoming the reflection suggests a process or motion, hence the sense of the ἀναχθῆναι⁸⁹. The realization of its λόγος/ἀναλογία is for each creature a continuous activity, particularly, as we shall see, a perpetual ascent into knowledge – the ἀναγωγή – and thus, together with this growth in knowing, an ever-increasing participation in the divine θελήματα or "movements" of the Good. Therefore, although the creature fulfills its ἀναλογία through discovering its place in a well-articulated cosmos⁹⁰, yet that place itself remains always an activity and a progress into God.

Stasis, repose as the equivalent to the creature's fulfillment of its ἀναλογία, is then far from static. We recall that God as the Good is repose and motion for all, equally the source of both, and that both are mentioned in the same breath in reference to what is "beyond all repose and motion"⁹¹. Dionysius' στάσις is not static because, as the expression of a given creature's ἀναλογία, it is a reflection of the divine Providence. The latter may indeed be termed "repose", as grounding the identity of all things in its own transcendent "reality"⁹², yet it remains first of all God in motion, the "fixed procession and fertile repose"⁹³. Thus the "repose" of created being in Dionysius' vision can never, as was the case with the Origenists⁹⁴, be conceived of as some ultimate, or both primordial and ultimate, cessation of activity and motion. The creature's repose, precisely its reality and beatitude as a given reflection of the uncreated God *ad extra*, lies in its motion towards, and specific activity in imitation of, the abiding transcendence and unceasing energies of Providence⁹⁵.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Note the passive voice and recall Chapter I above, 67, notes 171-172, on ἐπιστρέφω. The same predominance of the passive, when the verb applies to the creature, applies to ἀνάγω. Thus, for example, CH I.3 121C (8:18); II.1 137B (10:11); IV.1 177C (20:6); EH I.2 373A (65:15); III.1 424C (79:5); IV.1 472D (95:6); V.1.4 504C (106:25); DN I.3 589C (111:17); III.1 680C (139:5) (we are led up to divine radiance in prayer); V.9 825A (188:17); MT I.1 1000A (142:11) (for Timothy to be led up, again in prayer, to the supreme vision of God's mystery); and see CH I.3 124A (9:13) for God as the active agent, and CH II.3 141A (13:7); IV.2 180B (21:12-14); and V 196C (25:18-19) for the angels as leading us up. Thus, while Rorem, *Symbols*, 111 rightly notes that ἀνάγω/ἀναγωγή is for Dionysius – following Iamblichus – a *terminus technicus* for "spiritual interpretation", still we insist on seeing in the use of the passive an indication that Dionysius is simultaneously – indeed, predominantly – referring to the activity of divine power or grace within us; see Chapter III below, 134-135.

90. Indeed in this paragraph we have sketched Dionysius' definition of hierarchy; see CH III.1 164D (17:3-9), and Chapter III, 122-141.

91. See esp. DN IV.7 704C (152:22-153:2), and also IV.10 705BC (154:7-11).

92. DN IX.8 916B (212:16-213:6).

93. DN IX.9 916D (213:18).

94. See our argument concerning Origen and Evagrius, Chapters V and VIII below, 274-276 and 324 respectively.

95. For the στάσις/κίνησις tension and its relation to mysticism and deification in the Christian Neoplatonists, including and subsequent to Dionysius, see Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, esp. 243-244.

b) Κίνησις

All motion whatever has its origins in God. “In”, “for”, “from”, and “toward” the Good all repose and motion have their being and meaning.⁹⁶ All things are moved by the Good⁹⁷, and all, even not-being, are stirred by desire for it (ἐφέσεως κίνησις)⁹⁸. Drawing its being from Providence, created existence moves to the ἐπιστροφή to its transcendent source, “the creatures endowed with intellection and those having reason, after the manner of knowledge of vital desire”⁹⁹. All motion looks to Providence, the Good, for its cause, whether that motion be of intellection, of discursive thought, the surges of irritability¹⁰⁰ or of desire¹⁰¹, or the physical round of sun and stars¹⁰². Similarly, the whole creation looks to Providence for the preservation and ordering of its proper motion in order to accomplish the continuous realization of its being. As Dionysius says of the divine Peace:

And if the things that are in motion [i.e., all creation] do not keep still [μὴ ἡρεμεῖν], but would rather be moved ever in their proper motion, even this is a desire [ἐφesus] for the divine and universal Peace, which preserves all things unerringly in themselves and conserves immobile and indefectible the proper life and principle of motion of all, by which all things moved abide at peace with themselves and, ever abiding identical with themselves, accomplish those things that are proper to them¹⁰³.

Motion, i.e., motion as embracing change and progress, is the very expression of created being. Never is the creature without movement or outside of becoming. Existence means motion, change. The motion of our being is called upon to conform itself to the λόγος/ἀναλογία of our nature that remains always in process of a realization never absolutely achieved, ever-desired and ever striven after. It is this desire that is the key to and sign of our reflection of the Good. Even in the worst sinners, Dionysius tells us, there remains “a certain movement of desire”¹⁰⁴. The latter leads us to the point that, while our motion is equivalent

96. *DN* IV.10 705D (154:20-24).

97. *Ibid.*

98. *DN* IV.23 725B (171:12).

99. “... τὰ μὲν νοερά καὶ λογικά γνωστικῶς, τὰ δὲ αἰσθητικά αἰσθητικῶς, τὰ δὲ αἰσθήσεως ἁμοῖρα τῇ ἐμφύτῳ κινήσει τῆς ζωτικῆς ἐφέσεως”. *DN* IV.4 700B (148:16-17); see also I.5 593B (116:10-13) and VI.1 856B (191:2-8).

100. *DN* IV.20 720B (167:4); and *CH* II.4 141D (14:7-8).

101. *CH* II.4 141D-144A (14:4).

102. *DN* IV.4 697B (147:15-21).

103. “Καὶ εἰ τὰ κινούμενα πάντα μὴ ἡρεμεῖν, ἀλλὰ κινεῖσθαι ἀεὶ τὴν ἑαυτῶν κίνησιν ἐθέλοι, καὶ τοῦτο ἐφesus ἐστὶ τῆς θείας τῶν ὅλων εἰρήνης, τῆς πάντα ἐφ’ ἑαυτῶν ἀδιάπτωτα διασωζούσης καὶ τὴν πάντων τῶν κινουμένων ιδιότητα καὶ κινητικὴν ζωὴν ἀκίνητον καὶ ἀπτωτον φιλαπτούσης ἐν τῷ τὰ κινούμενα πρὸς ἑαυτὰ εἰρηνεύοντα καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντα δοῶν τὰ ἑαυτῶν”. *DN* IX.4 952CD (220:12-17).

104. *DN* IV.23 725B (171:12).

to this abiding desire for God, it is also true that it may be perverted out of weakness or ignorance – hence Dionysius' definition of evil in souls as deriving "from disordered and rebellious motion"¹⁰⁵. Evil is an "aversion [παράτροπή]... and departure [ἔκβασις] from the things that are proper"¹⁰⁶. Motion therefore comprises both desire and will. It is at the heart of Dionysius' vision of the created universe and of God in relation to that universe. We turn now to take note of the specific modes of motion proper to the created existents in whom creation finds its recapitulation and meaning, the reason-endowed beings, humans and angels.

1) *Angelic motion*

The movement of the angels is defined in the fourth chapter of the *DN*:

And the divine minds are said to be moved in a circular manner when they are united to the unoriginate and unending illumination of the Good and Beautiful; directly whenever they proceed to the providence of subordinates, immediately accomplishing all things; and in a spiral manner when, at once taking forethought for their inferiors, they remain without departure in identity, unceasingly dancing around the Good and Beautiful which is the cause of identity¹⁰⁷.

Angelic motion lies outside of those categories of time and space that affect human beings, who are subject to the exigencies and limitations of corporal being¹⁰⁸. The angels are the beings "closest" to God – immaterial (ἄυλοι), bodiless (ἄσώματοι) – in short, the created intelligible world (κόσμος νοητός) of the Dionysian universe. Their motion is therefore purely a matter of the intelligence or, better, of intellection or intuition:

... for it is not from without that God moves them to divine things, but instead intellectively and they are illumined to the most divine counsel from within by means of a pure and immaterial ray¹⁰⁹.

105. "ἀτάκτου καὶ πλημμελοῦς κινήσεως", *DN* IV.28 729B (175:1-2).

106. *DN* IV.23 725B (171:14-16).

107. "Καὶ κινεῖσθαι μὲν οἱ θεῖοι λέγονται νόες, κυκλικῶς μὲν ἐνούμενοι ταῖς ἀνάρχοις καὶ ἀτελευτήτοις ἐλλάμψεσι τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ, κατ' εὐθείαν δέ, ὁπόταν προΐωσιν εἰς τὴν τῶν ὑφειμένων πρόνοιαν, εὐθεία τὰ πάντα περαίνοντες, ἐλικσειδῶς δέ, ὅτι καὶ προνοοῦντες τῶν καταδεεστέρων ἀνεκφοιτήτως μένουσιν ἐν ταυτότητι περὶ τὸ τῆς ταυτότητος αἴτιον καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἀκαταλήκτως περιχορεύοντες". *DN* IV.8 704D-705A (153:4-9).

108. See again Dionysius on αἰών and χρόνος in *DN* X.3 937C-940A (216:2-217:4) and our discussion above. See also Roques, "Introduction", lxxii-lxxv, wherein he notes that, as distinct from our experience of time (χρόνος) and from God who simply takes on the name of αἰών in relation to us, the angels are said to enjoy an αἰώνιος χρόνος, a "durée", knowing eternity although not as God does. Unlike God, they are ever in the process of realizing eternity, hence their motion – a vision significantly different from Plotinus' Νοῦς (*Enn.* V.1.4) which is eternal actuality.

109. "Οὐ γὰρ ἔξωθεν αὐτάς ὁ Θεὸς ἐπὶ τὰ θεῖα κινεῖ, νοητῶς δὲ καὶ ἐνδοθεν ἐλλαμπομένων αὐτῶν ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρᾷ καὶ ἀύλῳ τὴν θειωτάτην βούλησιν". *EH* I.4 376B (67:2-4).

It is this immaterial, immediate aspect of their motion or knowing – and for Dionysius the latter two, particularly with respect to the reason-endowed beings, are inseparable – which permits our author to speak of the heavenly intelligences as being “united” to the divine illumination. For them there is no break, no hesitation or process of dialectic in attaining to the object of their intellectual motion. Instead, in a manner certainly reminiscent of Plotinus’ *Noûs*¹¹⁰, they are “united to their intellections and to the things that they are in the process of intellecting”¹¹¹. There is neither complexity nor ambiguity attached to their motion. It proceeds instead directly to “simple intellections [ἀπλὰι νοήσεις]”. Being free from “material multiplicity” and dividedness, the angels enjoy a uniform and all-embracing (ἐνοειδῶς... συνοπτική) vision of the divine counsel to which they are joined as being thus above the distinction of knower and known, and, to continue with this passage, to which they are ever in process of being conformed (ἀποτυπουμένη)¹¹².

The last, of course, is not a pagan sentiment¹¹³ and it merits a brief discussion. Roques, in summing up the characteristics of angelic motion and knowledge, declares there to be “exclusively a progress in the unification of the intelligence, which our notion of time is quite inapt to measure”¹¹⁴. Progress is not a notion familiar to the pagan philosophers in relation to either *νοῦς* or *ψυχή*, and this open-ended aspect of *κίνησις* reveals the tension inherent in the *λόγος/ἀναλογία* notion we spoke of above. It breaks up the Neoplatonist cycles. Dionysius speaks in the *CH* of the angels’ “ever-moving course towards [ἐπί] the divine”, or their “progression toward [ὁδοποιητικὸν πρὸς] the heights”¹¹⁵. *Ἀεικίνησις* is in constant use whenever our author discusses the hosts of heaven¹¹⁶. It does not appear to us – and here we stand opposed to Gandillac¹¹⁷ – simply as a kind of perpetual revolution about (περὶ)¹¹⁸ the knowledge of God, but as well, as is suggested by the usage of *ἐπί* and *πρὸς* and *εἰς*¹¹⁹, a continuing ascent and ever-

110. Thus see, for example, *Enn.* VI.7.35. Recall, though, that the angels are creatures, not creators. As we see below, their *πρόοδος* is a principle of spiritual life and not a demiurgic function. Neither are they exclusively real (τὰ κυρίως ὄντα) as is *Noûs* in *Enn.* II.4.16.

111. “ταῖς νοήσεσιν... καὶ τοῖς νοουμένοις”, *DN* XI.2 949C (219:5-6).

112. *DN* VII.2 868B (195:11).

113. For Plotinus the universe stands already “accomplished to the ultimate possibility”, *Enn.* IV.8.6.

114. Roques, *L’Univers*, 164.

115. *CH* XV.3 332C (54:13-15).

116. In addition to the texts just cited, see *CH* VII.1 205BC (27:14-16); VII.4 212A (31:9); XIII.4 305A (47:18); XV.2 329B (52:19); *EH* IV.3.7 481A (100:15); *DN* VI.1 and 856B (190:6) VI.2 856C (191:12); and VII.4 892B (202:2).

117. Gandillac, 107, note 1.

118. For this preposition in connection with *ἀεικίνησις*, see *CH* VII.4 212A (31:7); XV.9 340A (58:20).

119. See the texts quoted above, together with *CH* VIII.1 240A (33:11-15); and XIII.4 304D-305A (47:18).

deepening union into and with the God who is contemplated. Thus the angels "are led up toward the intuitive knowledge of the thing beheld"¹²⁰. In what is perhaps his clearest recollection of Gregory of Nyssa's ἐπέκτασις¹²¹, Dionysius speaks in *DN* IV of human souls, "tasting fully [ἀπογευόμενοι] of the divine light and, still desiring more", of their "stretching ever to that which is before"¹²². The source of this perpetual motion, both for angels and for humans, is the ever-present desire (ἐφεσις) for the Good that both receives from the same gracious Providence, "from the δύναμις which is infinitely good"¹²³.

Let us stress that "infinite", for here, in God's infinity and in his gift to his creation of unending desire, lies the key at once to Dionysius' alteration of the pagans' perpetual round (and so of their notion of the microcosmos), and his fidelity to patristic tradition as represented particularly by Gregory of Nyssa. First of all, like the latter's God, Dionysius' is unambiguously infinite, ἄπειρος¹²⁴. We say "unambiguously" because the term is not unknown to the Neoplatonists. Plotinus, however, only very reluctantly applied it to the One¹²⁵ while, for the later philosophers, it stood specifically below the first principle¹²⁶, whether the dyad, πέρας - ἄπειρον¹²⁷, or the triad, πέρας - ἄπειρον - μικτόν¹²⁸. While we can indeed find examples in the *CD* paralleling the philosophers' use of the term¹²⁹, as well as others in which ἄπειρον is used to signify "formlessness" or "disorder"¹³⁰, there remain several texts where Dionysius clearly identifies God with the infinite. The divine is, for example, "ἀόρατον... ἄπειρον καὶ ἀχώρητον" and we can never thus comprehend its "ὑπερούσιον καὶ ἀννόητον καὶ ἄρρητον ἀοριστίαν"¹³¹. The

120. *CH* XIII.4 305A (47:18-19).

121. For this term and Gregory of Nyssa on κίνησις, see Chapter VII below, 305-308.

122. "ἀεὶ ἀνατείνειν αὐτὰς ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσω κατὰ τὴν σφῶν εἰς ἀνάνευσιν ἀναλογίαν", *DN* IV.5 701A (149:17-20). See also von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, 175, on the room existing in Dionysius' notion of fittingness (i.e. ἀναλογία) for "an endless striving", a "matter of infinite approximation" to the measure laid down by the infinite God in whom we are called to share.

123. *DN* VII.4 872C (202:3).

124. See Chapter VII, 292.

125. And that only in relation to the One's δύναμις, *Enn.* V.8.9. For an analysis, see Armstrong, "Plotinus' Doctrine of the Infinite and Christian Thought" *DRev* 73 (1954/5) 47-58, esp. 53.

126. See esp. Proclus, *Elements*, prop. 92, 83. Also, more generally, see propositions 89-92, 83, and Dodds' comment, 246-248.

127. In Iamblichus, see Dillon, *Iamblichus*, 31-32; and in Proclus, *Théol. Plat.* III.8 (Saffrey/Westerink) 30-34.

128. See Beierwaltes, *Proklos*, 50-59. See again Lilla, "The Motion of Infinitude", 120-121.

129. See, for example, *DN* IV.10 705C (154:16); V.10 825B (189:9); VIII.2 889D (201:6-8); XIII.1 977B (226:11) and XIII.3 980C (228:20). Also, in relation to the expression ἀπειροδύναμος, *DN* VII.1 889D (201:4) and VIII.3 892B (201:17).

130. Thus see *DN* IV.31 732B (176:12-13) and IV.32 732D (177:14); XI.1 949A (218:4) and XI.5 953A (220:21).

131. *CH* II.3 140D-141A (12:15-20).

relation of infinity to the divine incomprehensibility clearly corresponds to the Nyssene¹³². Similarly in line with Gregory, Dionysius also speaks of the divine infinity in which we, the creation, are called to participate: “the infinite and selfless sea of the divine light, ever ready to open itself for all to share”¹³³. God’s gifts¹³⁴, graces¹³⁵, and love¹³⁶ are thus likewise infinite. It is then, secondly, in that endless gift of love that we discover the meaning of the angels’ perpetual motion and, indeed, of our own beatitude as *ισάγγελοι*¹³⁷. We find that there can therefore be no end to the ascent, and so no cycles. Any creaturely desire for God must remain, eternally, desire. It can never be satisfied, which is to say that it can never, in the face of an infinitely generous Providence, discover an end to God’s gift of himself. The angels are therefore said to have an “undiminishing desire” for the Good, to be “ever in a state of desiring”¹³⁸. Their (and so, our) enjoyment of God, their contemplation, cannot then be other than an everlasting ascent into knowledge¹³⁹, a perpetual movement into beatitude and union – though the latter term stands as well, albeit relatedly, for a creaturely experience¹⁴⁰ that is strictly speaking outside the capabilities of created being. We shall return to *ἔνωσις* in our final section below, but for now our point is clear: the pagan cycles are broken by the single “cycle” of the divine procession in which the creature is called to participate. This means in turn that created, intelligent being, as a microcosmos, is far from being an already accomplished reality. It is instead an openness to the divine, a continuous process of assimilation to, and reflection of, the gift and motion of the God whose “ends” vanish in the infinity of his secret being.

In relation to that activity of reflection, and as a prelude to the created microcosmos as requiring community rather than isolation, we turn to the “direct” and “spiral” motions of the angels. As the beings “closest” to God, the “firsts” of creation, the angels most perfectly mirror the divine Providence. They are *θεοειδείς*, or *θεομίμητοι*, the closest analogs to God who as Providence both abides in transcendence and proceeds forth to creation¹⁴¹. Thus the angels,

132. For the notion as related to God’s incomprehensibility, see also the *κρύφια ἀπειρία* of *DN* I.1 588C (110:12); to his transcendence (*ὑπεροχή*), *IX.2* 909C (208:10) and *IX.7* 916A (212:14): God is removed from all things *μέτροις ἀπείροις καὶ ἀσυγκρίτοις*. Compare our discussion below of Gregory of Nyssa, Chapter VII, 292 and 304-306.

133. “Τὸ πᾶσιν ἔτοιμος εἰς μετάδοσιν ἀναπεπταμένον τοῦ θεαρχικοῦ φωτός ἀπειρόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον πέλαγος”. *CH* IX.3 261A (38:11-12); see also Gandillac, 135, note 2.

134. *DN* V.3 817B (182:15): of the *ἀπειροδώρου Θεοῦ*.

135. *EH* III.3.15 445C (94:17-18); τὰς ἀπείρους τῶν θεουργιῶν [τοῦ Ἰησοῦ] χάριτας.

136. *EH* III.3.11 441A (91:9): the *ἀπειροτάτη φιλανθρωπία* which gave us Christ; and, relatedly, see *DN* III.2 681D (141:9-10), a reference to 1 Corinthians and the “weakness” of God in Jesus Christ.

137. *DN* VII.2 868BC (195:12-16).

138. “ἀνελάττωτος ἔφεσις... ἀεὶ ἐφίεσθαι εἶναι”, *DN* VIII.4 892 C (202:1-5).

139. Thus see Dionysius’ discussion of angelic *κάθαρσις* as a continuous advance into knowledge, *CH* VII.3 209C (30:19, 23); and Roques, “Introduction”, lxxv-lxxvi.

140. *DN* VII.1 865C-868A (194:10-15).

141. See esp. *DN* IX.9 916C (213:18-19) and, for comment, Gandillac, 164-165, note 1.

established in contemplation about God, also proceed to the providence of those beneath them. Here we may briefly note a point we shall return to below, another basic alteration of the Neoplatonists' scheme. The latter see the act of emanation as accomplished in the very act of ἐπιστροφή, with the higher level, as it were, "throwing off" the level beneath it as it returns in contemplation (θεωρία) to its source¹⁴². Dionysius dismisses the demiurgic function, but keeps the ethical aspect¹⁴³ as a principle of the spiritual life. The angels' "direct" motion is a function of their turning to God but, instead of becoming thus secondary creators or causes, they become rather revelations of the one cause¹⁴⁴, images (εἰκόνες) of the divine power¹⁴⁵ and of a kind of sovereign freedom¹⁴⁶. They become indeed truly the declarations of their own λόγοι, and powers thereby who lead back and up to the universal source of all in God¹⁴⁷. Their "spiral" motion is simply a way of stating that the two first forms are simultaneous: in the process of moving toward fulfillment of their λόγος/ἀναλογία, the angels most clearly declare their source and so fulfill as well their providential task of which we, humankind, are the primary beneficiaries.

ii) Human motion

The definition of our κίνησις, that of the soul, is also given in *DN IV*. As it will prove of great importance for the rest of our essay, we quote it at length:

And motion of the soul is 'circular' when the soul enters into itself and away from exterior things, a "rolling-up" of its intellectual powers, as in the manner of a circle returning unerringly to itself away from the multiplicity of things outside of itself, and first gathering itself into itself, then, uniting itself – as having become in the form of the One – to the uniformly united powers [i.e. the angels], it is thus guided to the Good and Beautiful that is beyond all beings, both one and the same, without beginning or end. The soul is moved in a 'spiral' form when it, in so far as is proper to it, is illuminated as to divine knowledge, not in a uniform or intellective manner, but rather through reason and discourse, and so in a manner of speaking in mixed and altering operations. Its motion is "direct" whenever it does not enter into itself or is moved by uniform intellection – for this is, as I have said, the circular manner – but rather when it proceeds to the

142. See, for example, *Enn.* III.8.3; IV.4.22; and V.1.6.

143. Certainly, the ethical aspect was important for the pagans as well; see *Enn.* 1.2.6-7 and E. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. Thomas (1958) 88.

144. *CH X.2* 273A (273B 40:11-14).

145. *CH VIII.1* 240A (33:14).

146. See Dionysius' description of fire, *CH XV.2* 329A-C (52:11-53:5), as a symbol for God and thus for the angels as deiform and moving in imitation of him.

147. *CH XV.6* 333D-336B (55-56); and *XV.8* 337AB (57:6-22), the latter in reference to the angels holding up the chariot of God in Ezekiel 1.

things about it, and from these exterior things, as from certain varied and multiplied symbols, is led up to contemplations that are simple and unified¹⁴⁸.

Here again Dionysius has given priority to the “circular” mode of motion or knowledge which, as E. Hugueny writes, “preserves, quite while participating in the mobility of becoming, something of the uniformity, of the immobility of the divine Eternity. It is also this movement which is the principle of all the others”¹⁴⁹. As with the angels, the motions of the human soul are equivalent properly to the realization of their ἀναλογίαι. Unlike the angels, however, we are yet a further step removed from the divine unity at once transcendent and perfectly present. The human reality is not the angelic. We are embodied spirits, partaking of both the sensible and intelligible worlds, and uniting them both in ourselves¹⁵⁰. Our mode of knowing is thus “mixed and changing”, dependent on the necessarily limited vision of the intelligible that may be derived from the discursive and progressively deepening consideration of the “echoes [ἠπληγήματα]” of the divine Wisdom found in the sensible world, and so our knowledge lacks the spontaneity and immediacy of the angelic motion¹⁵¹. We require, at least on this side of the eschaton¹⁵², the assistance of symbols taken from the sensible world¹⁵³. To reverse the order given in the text above, we move out to a consideration of the things about us and, penetrating as it were their material opacity, circle about them in growing awareness of their divine content until we are enabled to return to ourselves – hence the priority of the circle image: out, about, and back – where, gathering together our perceptions and refining them, we are ready to be led up to

148. “Ψυχῆς δὲ κίνησις ἐστὶ κυκλική μὲν ἢ εἰς ἑαυτὴν εἰσοδος ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξω καὶ τῶν νοερῶν αὐτῆς δυνάμεων ἢ ἐνοειδῆς συνέλιξις, ὥσπερ ἐν τινὶ κύκλῳ τὸ ἀπλανὲς αὐτῇ δωρουμένη καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν πολλῶν τῶν ἔξωθεν αὐτῇ ἐπιστρέφουσα καὶ συνάγουσα πρῶτον εἰς ἑαυτήν, εἶτα ὡς ἐνοειδῇ γενομένη ἐνοῦσα ταῖς ἐνιαίως ἡνωμέναις δυνάμεσι καὶ οὕτως ἐπὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν χειραγωγοῦσα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ ὄντα καὶ ἐν καὶ ταῦτόν καὶ ἀναρχὸν καὶ ἀτελεύτητον. Ἑλικοειδῶς δὲ ἡ ψυχὴ κινεῖται, καθόσον οἰκείως ἑαυτῇ τὰς θείας ἐλλάμπεται γνώσεις, οὐ νοερῶς καὶ ἐνιαίως, ἀλλὰ λογικῶς καὶ διεξοδικῶς, καὶ οἶον συμμίκτοις καὶ μεταβατικαῖς ἐνεργείαις. Τὴν κατ’ εὐθείαν δέ, ὅταν οὐκ εἰς ἑαυτὴν εἰσιοῦσα καὶ ἐνικῇ νοερότητι κινουμένη, τοῦτο γάρ, ὡς ἔφην, ἐστὶ τὸ κατὰ κύκλον, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτὴν προΐοῦσα καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξωθεν ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τινων συμβόλων πεποικιλεμένων καὶ πεπληθυσιμένων ἐπὶ τὰς ἀπλᾶς καὶ ἡνωμένας ἀνάγεται θεωρίας”. DN IV.9 705AB (153:10-154:6).

149. E. Hugueny, “Circulaire, rectiligne, hélicoïdale, les trois degrés de la contemplation” *RSTP* 13 (1924) 329. See also Koch, *Beziehungen*, 150-153, and Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 72-75 for the background in Proclus of the threefold motion. Gersh, notes however that in at least one instance Proclus is speaking of bodily motions.

150. So, at any rate, we do assume. It is a key point for the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as the reality of our world, the divine within the sensible, and thus opposed to the views held by Brons *Gott u.S.*, 30-56 and esp. 52-56.

151. DN VII.2 868BC (195:12-20), and also EH I.1 372A (64:2-4).

152. Note Dionysius’ promise of the isangelic state to come, DN I.4 592C (115:3-4).

153. DN VII.2 868BC (195:12-20); see also CH I.3 121Cf (8:19-9:7); and EH I.2 373AB (65:11-17).

the succeeding stages of knowledge with the angels, of course, acting as our guides. As Dionysius writes elsewhere:

... we make use of elements and symbols and words and writings and reasonings for the sake of the senses, but when our soul is moved by its intellective powers toward intelligible things, the senses together with sensible beings become superfluous as do, indeed, the intellective powers themselves, once the soul, having arrived at the likeness of God, is impelled by an unknown union to the rays of the light unapproachable by means of sightless [lit. "without eyes"] impulsions¹⁵⁴.

We shall return below to this mysterious *ένωσις*. For now we should like to draw attention to two points. First, the mode of human motion or knowing is inferior to the angelic, bound to the world of time, and so of succession, alienation (*ἀλλοίωσις*), and, implicitly, of mortality¹⁵⁵. Yet it is inclusive of a certain capacity for knowledge – rather, for “unknowing” – that is paradoxically outside of its proper sphere of being and activity. We are called upon first to imitate the motion of the angels on the plane of the sensible creation, then we are to be led up through this same sensible world, as through a succession of symbols, to the gates of divinity itself – and beyond. Secondly, however, we must ask how all this can be, especially given our mortality and its obvious limitations. How may we achieve the “form” of God here-below and how, truly, know him in the sensible? How, indeed, can we be expected to fulfill the infinite vocation of our *λόγος/ἀναλογία*? In reply 1) we have already alluded to the eschaton above, and thus 2) can already discern as implicit the grand design of the Incarnation, and therefore together with it, of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy’s simultaneous presence and promise of the world to come. The Incarnation, as the supreme expression of divine love, also directs us toward the nature of those nameless “impulsions” uniting us to God and so to that unique force which enables our imitation of God here below.

2. The power of love: *έρως*

“The primary motion toward divine things”, Dionysius tells us, “is the love [*ἀγάπησις*] of God”¹⁵⁶. In most cases throughout the *CD* the term used is *έρως*: “a

154. “...στοιχείοις καὶ συλλαβαῖς καὶ λέξεσι καὶ γραφαῖς καὶ λόγοις χρῶμεθα διὰ τὰς αἰσθήσεις. Ὡς ὅταν ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ ταῖς νοεραῖς ἐνεργείαις ἐπὶ τὰ νοητὰ κινεῖται, περιτταὶ μετὰ τῶν αἰσθητῶν αἱ αἰσθήσεις· ὥσπερ καὶ αἱ νοεραὶ δυνάμεις, ὅταν ἡ ψυχὴ θεοειδῆς γενομένη δι’ ἐνώσεως ἀγνώστου ταῖς τοῦ ἀπροσίτου φωτὸς ἀκτίσιν ἐπιβάλλει ταῖς ἀνομμάτοις ἐπιβολαῖς”. *DN* IV.11 708D (156:14-19).

155. *DN* X.3 937D (216:10-15); note also in this text the promise of a future change in our mode of being.

156. *EH* II.1 392B (69:4-12); note that Dionysius restricts any real love of, or motion toward, God to the baptized Christians. The “divine birth” is required, since “on the human level it is first necessary that we exist, and then act... because that which in no way exists, neither moves nor subsists”, *Ibid.* See Chapter IV below, 191-194.

certain unifying and conserving power... moving the superior beings to providence of the inferiors, equals into communion with one another, and finally subordinates towards the return to their superiors"¹⁵⁷. Now this quotation is certainly reminiscent of Proclus¹⁵⁸, and it is clearly with the latter in mind that Hathaway defines Dionysius' ἔρως as the "ἀνατατική δύναμις that lifts up each being towards its own generic principle [i.e., its λόγος]"¹⁵⁹. The definition is correct, so far as it goes, but it is also misleading. In order to balance it, we must recall that refers to what is simultaneously the origin of created ἔρως, God's Providence, the divine love, in which "single and simple power"¹⁶⁰ all ἔρως, throughout the cosmos discovers its source. God is the first to love or desire in the *CD* and, in consequence, any "pull" or "tension" that the creature may know in the direction of its origins, the λόγοι located in the divine energies, must be understood as the created analog – together, we ought to note, with the active presence of the divine prototype – of that original and uncreated "tension" which "pulled" the transcendent God into the act of creation and relation with the beings whom he had made. This is the true sense of Hierotheos' three "compressions" found in the definition of ἔρως in *DN IV*¹⁶¹. Beginning with a general description of ἔρως, "whether divine or angelic, whether intellective or of the soul or of physical things", the author moves to a "gathering" or "compression [συναρροῦντες]" of these varied sorts of ἔρως into two fundamental expressions, that which stems, first, from the creature and, second, from the Creator. We arrive finally at the last compression into the one, unique ἔρως, "a single, simple δύναμις" uniting all things and stemming from God's traversal of all creation and return through all of creation back to himself. It is therefore in the unique ἔρως of God that the love proper to created intelligence – and everything else – must be said to participate. On each level of created being, every creature has its proper reflection, its analog, of the θεῖος ἔρως¹⁶². Thus the angels are said to "have the

157. "...ένωτικήν καί συγκρατικήν έννοήσωμεν δύναμιν τά μέν ύπέρτερα κινούσαν επί πρόνοιαν τών καταδεεστέρων, τά δέ όμόστοιχα πάλιν είς κοινωνικήν άλληλουχίαν καί έπ' έσχάτων τά ύφειμένα πρός τήν τών κρείττόνων καί ύπερκειμένων έπιστροφήν". *DN IV.15* 713AB (161:2-5).

158. See our discussion above on the divine love and Proclus, Chapter 1, 66-68.

159. Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, 60.

160. *DN IV.17* 715D (162:1-2).

161. *DN IV.15-17* 715A-D (161:1-162:5).

162. Note how often ἔρως is prefixed with θεῖος: *CH II.4* 144A (14:12); *IV.2* 180A (21:7); *XV.8* 337B (58:1-2); *EH III.3.7* 436B (87:18); *IV.3.5* 480C (100:2); *V.1.2* 532C (116:2-3); *VII.3.10* 565C (130:10); *DN IV.12* 709C (158:3); *IV.13* 712A (158:19); *VIII.8* 869B (205:4); *X.1* 937A (215:6-7); *Ep. X* 1117B (209:1). In contrast, we hear only twice of an evil ἔρως; the desire of evil which marks the fallen (*EH II.3.3* 400A [74:16]) and which is explained later as a falling away (έκπτώσις) from true or divine ἔρως (*DN IV.12* 709C [158:1-2]). Therefore its general characteristic is that it belongs to God as that divine motion – or grace – from which it is still possible for a free creature to "relax" (*EH II.3.3* 400A [74:16]) or "fall away" (*DN VIII.8* 896B [205:4]).

divine ἔρως unceasingly”, just as their knowledge comes to them without effort¹⁶³. We, on the other hand, as belonging to a lower plane of being and, moreover, as fallen, may deny or pervert it¹⁶⁴. In both cases, though, it remains the force, outside of and prior to rational or even intellectual thought¹⁶⁵, that wells up within the created intelligence, impels the latter to motion up the paths of the knowledge of God¹⁶⁶, and that increasingly shapes the creature’s activity in conformity with the divine. Ἐρως, as a process of continuous motion and ascent, is that power enabling the creature to realize its ἀναλογία and so to become truly itself. We become what we are through love of God – or, better, through God loving in us. In seeking to picture this process we have found two very rough images to be useful. The first is that of a river system comprising innumerable tributaries joining larger ones – i.e. from φυσικὸς to ψυχικὸς to νοερὸς ἔρως – until finally all meet in the one, great river whose end and beginning is the sea (τὸ ἄπειρόν τε καὶ ἀφθονον πέλαγος). The reader must bear in mind, though, both that the great river is at once present in and the source of its tributaries, and that the latter never lose their identity in the sea. The second image, one that also bears on Dionysius’ alteration of the emanation scheme, is the coalescence of a star from its constituent nebula. That “stuff” from which the soul “condenses”, and that comprises its own deepest reality, is ultimately none other than the love, the λόγος, of God directed specifically toward it. In turning toward that source (the ἐπιστροφή) the soul at once accomplishes progressively the realization of its own true being, and increases the intensity of its warmth and light directed to those about it (the πρόοδος)¹⁶⁷. The “gravity” of divine grace, if heeded, compels this concentration and accompanying radiance. We may then rightly speak of “radiation” resulting from the creature’s “return”, but never of a second level creation. The image is also useful in that it suggests the divinely-willed variation in “magnitude” present in the firmament of created intelligences (I Cor 15:41), and so, together with the astral families of constellations and galaxies, the orders, ranks, and interlocking dependencies of the hierarchies.

It remains to be noted that ἔρως, as beginning in God, must also have its end in God. The creature in moving to realize its λόγος is compelled to transcend itself: “ἔρως on the part of the creatures, just as with God [is] ecstatic”¹⁶⁸. It is no more than the logical outcome of the reason-endowed creature’s nature, in as

163. *EH* IV.3.5 480C (100:1-2), and *CH* II.4 144A (14:12-16).

164. See on the Fall, *EH* III.3.11 440C-441C (90:11-92:1) and below, Chapter IV, 177-181. Note also *EH* I.1 372B (64:4-5) where ἔρως is specifically linked with Jesus.

165. See G. Horn, “Amour et Extase d’après Denys l’Aréopagite” *RAM* 6 (1925) esp. 282-283.

166. See von Semmelroth, “Aufstieg”, 33.

167. For further discussion and examples of creaturely πρόοδος, see below, 103-104.

168. *DN* IV.13 712A (158:19-159:8). The quotation is from von Semmelroth, “Aufstieg”, 33. For an account of the same in Maximus, see Thunberg, *Microcosm*, esp. 95, and in the Neoplatonists, Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 39-40.

much as that nature is both deiform and theomimetic, that its “vector” or “thrust” should take it ultimately outside of itself.

3. Θεοειδής and θεομίμησις: potential and realization

A striking feature of the *CD* is the lack, with one exception, of any reference to the phrase from Genesis describing humans as “in the image and likeness of God”. We feel that Dionysius uses the expressions θεοειδής, θεομίμησις, and – to be dealt with in the following chapter – ἁφομοίωσις in place of the Biblical terms. This would appear to be borne out from the fact that the unique “image” and “likeness” reference appears in the context of a discussion on θέωσις¹⁶⁹ very much akin to the following usage of θεοειδής:

... through the deification that derives from him, there come to many gods by means of the deiformity proper to the potential of each; there appears and is said to be a differentiation and multiplication of the one God, yet God who is the source of gods and beyond gods... is no whit the less... unmingled with the many and unmultiplied¹⁷⁰.

The quality of θεοειδής would here appear to be something already existing within the creature – at least in potential. The latter term declares with characteristically Dionysian force that at no time may the θεοειδής be considered a static quality or given. Like ἀναλογία and στάσις to which it is related, the creature’s deiformity is something it may realize only in action. As Hornus rightly observes: “It is in an ascending mobility that we become images of God, ever tending more toward our model... ever separated from it by the unbridgeable chasm dividing the super-essential from all beings”¹⁷¹. We therefore discover the term serving most often as an adjective – the above citation constituting in fact one of its rare appearances as a substantive¹⁷² – such that when Dionysius speaks, for example, of the angels’ “deiform ranks”¹⁷³, or the “deiform *habitus*” restored by Christ¹⁷⁴, he is, as reflected particularly in the latter citation, describing rather an activity or process than an established state. For the creature to be in the form

169. “Αὐτόν [=Θεόν] δὲ ὁμοιότητα θείαν δωρεῖσθαι τοῖς ἐπ’ αὐτόν ἐπιστρεφομένοις τῇ κατὰ δύναμιν μιμήσει τὸν ὑπὲρ πάντα καὶ ὄρον καὶ λόγον. Καὶ ἔστιν ἡ τῆς θείας ὁμοιότητος δύναμις ἡ τὰ παραγόμενα πάντα πρὸς τὸ αἷτιον ἐπιστρέφουσα. Ταῦτα γοῦν ρητέον ὁμοία Θεῷ καὶ κατὰ θείαν εἰκόνα καὶ ὁμοίωσιν...” *DN IX.6* 913C (211:15-20); the broader context here of the divine ὁμοιότης seems further to bear out our contention.

170. “...τῇ ἐξ αὐτοῦ θεώσει τῷ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐκάστου θεοειδεῖ Θεῶν πολλῶν γιγνομένων δοκεῖ μὲν εἶναι καὶ λέγεται τοῦ ἐνὸς Θεοῦ διάκρισις καὶ πολλαπλασιασμός, ἔστι δὲ οὐδὲν ἥττον ὁ ἀρχιθεὸς καὶ ὑπέρθεος... τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀμιγῆς καὶ ἀπλήθυντος”. *DN II.11* 649C (136:13-17).

171. Hornus, “Réflexions”, 55.

172. See also *CH VII.2* 208 (28:15), and *VIII.1* 237C (33:7).

173. *CH II.2* 140B (11:22-12:1).

174. *EH III.3.12* 444B (93:9); see also the “deiform manner of returning good for evil”, *Ep. VIII.1* 1085B (173:3).

of God means to be in his likeness as action, movement. We find thus the angels' "deiform energies"¹⁷⁵ or "motion"¹⁷⁶ "gathering together" the multiplicity of their inferiors "in a providential and deiform manner"¹⁷⁷. We discover the soul's deiformity in process of realization (θεοειδής γενομένη), together with its union through unknowing "with the rays of the unapproachable light"¹⁷⁸. The allied expression, θεομίμησις¹⁷⁹, seems almost a doublet of the first, although it does tend rather more exclusively towards an emphasis on either action or the potential for action¹⁸⁰. It is then again equivalent, though more in the direction of actual realization or operation, to ἀναλογία and στάσις/κίνησις. We find a slight difference indicated, in the manner described, in Dionysius' use of the image of "fire" as revealing the angels' "deiformity and, as far as possible [ὡς ἐφικτόν], their imitation of God"¹⁸¹.

These two terms express in fact much of what we have been saying up to this point and it is under their general rubric that we wish to continue and conclude this section and, indeed, the final section itself on creaturely ἔκστασις and ἔνωσις. The likeness or imitation of God cannot but mean, in a system whose God in relation is God in motion, a continuous operation. The following section is also included because it is the proper τέλος of created being, in striving after its transcendent λόγος and thus acting in obedience to its ἀναλογία or potential for deiformity, so to realize itself in the imitation of God as to transcend itself. The theocentric or mimetic capacity of the reason-endowed creature is given it to be realized thus in two manners: providentially with regard to its fellow creatures, and ecstatically in relation to God. The first is accomplished through the variety of activities given us that lie, given divine cooperation¹⁸², within our powers. The second, however, takes us from knowing to unknowing entirely by means of the "impulsions" of divine love working within us. We turn now to a further consideration of the first.

a) Δύναμις and ἐνέργεια

Together with οὐσία, these terms express the three basic aspects of created existence¹⁸³, i.e., the full range of that which is proper to created beings. We

175. *CH* VIII.1 237D (33:9-10).

176. *Ibid.* 240A (33:12).

177. *DN* XII.4 972B (226:4-5).

178. *DN* IV.11 708D (156:17).

179. For their linkage, see *CH* VII.2 208A (28:15); VIII.1 237C (32:16-17), and 240A (33:11-12); XV.2 329C (53:5); and *DN* I.4 589D (112:14).

180. For the term used as an adjective with δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, see *CH* XIII.3 301C (45:20); with ἐνέργεια alone, XIII.3 304A (46:9) and XIII.4 305A (47:22-48:1); with κίνησις, *EH* IV.3.3 477A (98:6); and as a goal, i.e., with ἐπὶ and substantive θεομίμητον: *CH* III.1 164D (17:5); III.2 165B (18:15); IV.2 180A (21:3); VIII.1 240A (33:11); and, relatedly, *EH* III.3.12 441C (92:2-4).

181. *CH* XV.2 329C (53:5).

182. For συνεργεία and cognates, see note 87 above.

183. For the triad οὐσία - δύναμις - ἐνέργεια, see *CH* XI.2 284D (42:1-2); *DN* IV.1 693B (144:6-7); and IV.23 724C (170:16-17) and 725A (171:1).

emphasize the latter because, in contradistinction to God whose δύνανμις and ἐνέργεια express his action *ad extra*, these expressions in reference to the creature denote the latter as it is in itself, *in se*. We recall, too, that the λόγοι of each are held in the divine procession and therefore that created being mirrors Providence and (not the super-essence¹⁸⁴), the “ray” of God’s procession “super-essentially pre-contained the bounds of all essential knowledge and capacities [οὐσιώδεις γνώσεις καὶ δυνάμεις] by means of its wholly incomprehensible δύνανμις”¹⁸⁵. Finally, while in God any distinction between δύνανμις and ἐνέργεια may be suggested only very cautiously, in the creature they may be and are distinguished¹⁸⁶.

We translated δύνανμις just above as “capacity” rather than “power” or “virtue” because this expression in created being denotes a faculty or potential for action, and not necessarily an action accomplished or even in process. Dionysius can thus say of Jesus that he has given us the “δύνανμις of the sacred priesthood”, while it remains for us to “go on to its realization [ἐνέργεια]”¹⁸⁷. Similarly we learn in *DN VIII* that God has given us the δύνανμις for deification¹⁸⁸, but, as implied, the actuality of θέωσις remains at least in part our own responsibility. The whole discussion concerning evil revolves around this distinction, for if the creature has been according the potential for the imitation of God, this by no means necessitates the fulfillment of that potential. Evil does not affect the inherent capacity of any given creature for the good (although there is a suggestion in the *CD* that the Fall did mean some sort of inherited debility)¹⁸⁹. It is rather a “falling away [ἀπόπτωσις] from the power conserving perfection”, a “closing of one’s eyes to the Good”¹⁹⁰, a “weakness” or “want” of “the natural conditions, activities, and capacities”¹⁹¹. By this “weakness” or “want” Dionysius would appear to mean a failing of the will or, as in *EH II*, an attraction (ἔρως) for evil due to ignorance, mixed with “the capacities [δυνάμεις] for illumination naturally implanted in our capacity for self-determination [αὐτεξουσιότης]”¹⁹². If,

184. And still less the Trinity; see above Chapter I, 59-60, and below, Chapter VII, 307-308 for the same notion of the “image” as of God *ad extra* in Gregory of Nyssa.

185. *DN I.4* 592D-593A (115:13-14).

186. For discussion of the same in Maximus, see Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 56-57 and 122.

187. *EH I.1* 372B (64:7); other examples of δύνανμις as capacity are too numerous to cite in full, thus – for instance only – see *CH I.3* 124A (9:10-11); *EH II.3.3* 400A (74:16-17); *DN II.8* 645C (132:5); and *VIII.7* 896B (204:21).

188. *DN VIII.5* 893A (202:22).

189. See our discussion below, Chapter IV, 177-181 and note 57.

190. *DN IV.23* 725B (171:15-16).

191. *DN IV.25* 728B (173:7).

192. *EH II.3.3* 400A (74:15-17); see also *CH IX.3* 260C (38:3-5). For the capital importance of this term in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa, see J. Gaith, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse* (1943), and below, Chapter VII. Human freedom to refuse God is certainly stressed by both the Nyssene and Dionysius, and for both the choice against is simultaneously a loss of true freedom which only God can restore – see *EH II.3.6* 401D (77:15-16) for Christ and the restoration of our ἐλευθερία; and, relatedly, *Ep. VIII.5* 1097C (188:13-189.8); *Ep. X* 1117B (208:10-12); and Chapters IV and VII below, 181-182 and 309-310 respectively.

then, the capacities of the created being – in our case humanity – are provided for ascent toward the good, we nonetheless have the freedom not to realize them. We must cooperate with, become συνεργοί of, God¹⁹³. The δυνάμεις are then necessarily always good, since they are the potentialities expressed in the λόγοι addressed to each created being. The creature's actions, ἐνέργειαι, or realizations may, however, be either good¹⁹⁴ or bad¹⁹⁵, although the latter must always be understood as a perversion of the creature's proper activity¹⁹⁶.

Why a perversion? Because δυνάμεις and ἐνέργειαι, the former per force or per nature and the latter per deliberation, are both dependent on, and ultimately expressions of, the indivisibly multiplied power and operation of God¹⁹⁷. Each reason-endowed being is called to become the likeness of the divine by means of "grace and God-given capacity"¹⁹⁸ in so far, again, as each participates in the single "super-essential power which is creative of power"¹⁹⁹ and that extends throughout creation. The same applies to the ἐνέργειαι of each: "every sacred and theomimetic operation is to be referred to God as cause"²⁰⁰. There is then a "natural" and proper ἐνέργεια for the human being: precisely "to will oneself", i.e., to consent to and cooperate with, the unfolding of one's own true nature as God wills it. In as much as each rational being thus acts toward the fulfillment of its λόγος/ἀναλογία, it moves toward an increasing conformity with God's energies containing those same λόγοι, and thus, in its own contingent being, "shows forth... the divine energies"²⁰¹. The true nature of God's processions into and activities within his creation is love, and the eternal expression of that love is his Providence. Therefore created being, in fulfillment of its ἀναλογία and impelled by the divine ἔρως in which it participates, moves "naturally" to: πρόοδος and πρόνοια.

b) Πρόοδος and πρόνοια: procreation and providence

These activities in created beings are directly the result of the love that

193. See above, 87, note 64.

194. DN IV.24 728A (172:15) and IV.35 736A (179:8).

195. DN IV.30 732A (176:2 and 6) and IV.35 736A (179:8 and 13).

196. See, for example, DN IV.25 728B (173:6-7) and 30 732B (176:7-8).

197. In this and the following see the parallels in Maximus, Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 94 and 222-224, and (though he has some misgivings) von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, 187-189. The notion of true action and freedom as the willing of one's own being is also, of course, present in Plotinus; see for example *Enn.* III.1.9 and VI.8.4; and, for the comment, Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (1972) 63-64.

198. "χάριτι καὶ θεοδότην δυνάμει", CH III.3 168A (19:23); see also IV.1 177D (20:18-20); XIII.3 304A (46:7-19) and 304C (47:7-10); and EH I.1 372B (64:3-14).

199. CH VIII.1 240A (33:13-15).

200. CH XIII.3 301A (44:17-18); see also above, Chapter I, and DN IX.5 912D (210:10) and IX.9 916C (213:12-14); XIII.1 977B (226:13-227.1); and Ep. IX.3 1109D (203:1-5) on the energies.

201. CH III.2 165B (18:16-17); and also EH VI.17 508CD (109:22-25).

moves all toward providence with respect to those below one's rank, communion with one's equals, and attraction toward one's superiors²⁰². The creature is to become at once the expression and the agent of the uncreated procession of God that is "revealed and continuously present... in all the hierarchies"²⁰³. We thus find the angels spoken of frequently in terms relating to providence and procession²⁰⁴. The two expressions often occur simultaneously. For example, each level of the angelic hierarchy is said to be "moved to a generous and providential procession toward its subordinates"²⁰⁵. Each level, again, acts as a force to reveal, turn and lead the lower levels back up to their source in God²⁰⁶. The being and activity of all lie thus in their "participation in [God's] providential δύναμις through their generous procession to those below them"²⁰⁷.

Similarly, humankind too, as "moved by the love of God", discovers that its true σωτηρία²⁰⁸ lies in the assimilation to God's loving activity: for "the procession [i.e., ours] to the sacred practice [ἱερουργία] of the divine commandments is the ineffable effecting [also creation or making: δημιουργία] or our becoming divine"²⁰⁹. Here, in the context of the Church's liturgical life, Dionysius is clearly referring to the evangelical – especially Johannine (e.g. John 15:12 and I John 4:7-12) – commandments of love. It is thus during the Eucharist that the bishop provides us with an icon of the divine procession and Providence²¹⁰. This participation in God's Providence is finally our "natural" – i.e., true being as intended by God's λόγος for each – sharing in the activity of Jesus. It is Jesus who stands at the head, as principle and enabling power, of every created order²¹¹. Dionysius then notes that the angels are rendered worthy

... of the communion in Jesus, not by means of sacred images being conformed to the theurgic likeness, but as truly drawing nigh to him through a primary participation in the knowledge of his theurgic lights, and indeed that the imitation of God is given them in a supreme manner, and [that] they share, so far as it is possible for them... in his theurgic and

202. *DN* IV.15 713AB (161:1-5); see also IV.2 696B (144:19-145.1); IV.7 704B (152:14-18); IV.8 709D (158:13-18); and IV.13 712A (159:1-3).

203. *CH* IX.2 260B (37:11-13).

204. See *CH* VIII.2 240C (34:11-14); XV.1 328C (51:18-21); and XV.6 333D (55:20-22) for πρόνοια, and *CH* XIII.3 301D (46:1-5); XV.5 333B (55:10-11); XV.9 340A (59:1); and *DN* IV.7 704A (152:16) for πρόοδοι.

205. *CH* XV.6 333D (55:22).

206. "ἀνάγωγος... καὶ ἐπιστρεπτική δύναμις", *CH* XV.5 333B (55:11).

207. *CH* XV.1 328C (51:18-20).

208. See Dionysius' definition of the divine σωτηρία in *DN* VIII.9 896D (205:16-19) as τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκάστου καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίαν καὶ τάξιν ἀποσώζουσα καὶ φυλάττουσα, the cause (αἷτιον) of each being's proper activity (ἰδιοπραγία). It is not a definition that rules out the Incarnation, thus see *Ibid.* and our remarks following here.

209. *EH* II.1 392B (69:6-7).

210. See esp. *EH* III.3.3 429AB (82:17-83:10).

211. See esp. *CH* II.5 145C (16:17-19), and also IV.4 181C (23:18-24.3).

beneficent virtues²¹².

This is a summary of what we have been considering so far in our discussion concerning both δύνανμις and ἐνέργεια, and θεοειδής/θεομίμησις. It is also worthy of note that the created world's increasing participation in God's Providence is concentrated here specifically in the second Person of the Trinity.

While this mirroring of providential love is a primary aspect of the creature's fulfillment of its ἀναλογία, it is not yet the whole of that fulfillment. Procession and providence, while proper to the creature as such and declarative of divine Providence, do not express the whole of the creature's activities or motion. They signify rather a descent or condescension, the lending of aid and leading up of those below oneself, and as such constitute the expression of a state already in process of attainment. We noted above that the ascent of created ἔρως is a growth into the knowledge of God, and that it is the ever-increasing movement into the contemplation of divinity which has as its fruit, or "radiance", the beneficent activities just now discussed. Our text above therefore continues:

... and at the same time they are initiates, not as being illumined as to an analytic science of varied sacred things [that is, as opposed to human ways of knowing], but as filled with a primary and transcendent deification in accord with the supreme science of the divine operations proper to angels²¹³.

We thus move to the penultimate section of this chapter, and of our discussion of θεοειδής and θεομίμησις.

c) Γνωσις

In discussing created κίνησις, we noted that the activities of reason-endowed creatures are primarily defined in terms of thought, the motions of the intelligence (broadly understood). "Intellectual (νοερός)" or "intelective (νοερός)" in the *DN* thus frequently modify ἐνέργεια²¹⁴ when referring to the contemplation of divine things that spills over into action on behalf of one's fellows. What, then, is the context and content of this contemplation and, with respect to θεοειδής/θεομίμησις, how is it that both it and the knowledge (γνώσις) so obtained are in the form and imitation of God?

212. "... τῆς δὲ Ἰησοῦ κοινωνίας... οὐκ ἐν εἰκόσιν ἱεροπλάστοις μορφωτικῶς ἀποτυποῦσι τὴν θεουργικὴν ὁμοίωσιν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀληθῶς αὐτῷ πλησιαζούσας ἐν πρώτῃ μετουσίᾳ τῆς γνώσεως τῶν θεουργικῶν αὐτοῦ φώτων· καὶ μὴν ὅτι τὸ θεομίμητον αὐταῖς ὑπερτάτως δεδωρηται καὶ κοινωνοῦσι κατὰ τὸ αὐταῖς ἐφικτόν... ταῖς θεουργikaῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ φιλανθρώποις ἀρεταῖς..." *CH VII.2 208C* (29:9-15).

213. "... τετελεσμένas δὲ ὡσαύτως οὐχ ὡς ποικιλίας ἱερᾶς ἀναλυτικὴν ἐπιστήμην ἐλλαμπομέναs, ἀλλ' ὡς πρώτης καὶ ὑπερεχοῦσης θεώσεως ἀποπληρουμέναs κατὰ τὴν ὑπερτάτην ὡς ἐν ἀγγέλοις τῶν θεουργικῶν ἐπιστήμην". *CH VII.2 208CD* (29:15-18).

214. See *DN* I.1 588A (108:4-5); I.4 592D (115:9); II.7 645A (131:4 and 11); IV.1 693B (144:6-7); IV.9 705B (153:17-154:1); IV.11 708D (156:15-16); and VII.2 868B (195:3 and 8).

Beginning with the latter, we note that in his discussion of the divine Wisdom Dionysius declares that God “pre-contains the knowledge of all things in himself, in as much as he is the cause of all”. He thus “does not receive the knowledge of beings from the beings themselves, rather it is he who supplies them with the knowledge both of themselves and of others”²¹⁵. God knows the creature as Creator: “before angels came to be he knew them”²¹⁶, and so not “through any science of beings, but rather of himself”²¹⁷. The creaturely mode of knowledge is therefore a reflection of God in two respects: 1) any and every act of (true) knowing involves participation in him who “supplies” all knowledge as source and fount of knowing; and 2) just as God knows the creature through the knowledge of himself, so the creature knows God through the knowledge of itself and of its fellows.

In relation to the first point, the angels stand closer to God in knowing the things of, for example, the senses, “not by means of sensible perceptions... but in accordance with the proper capacity and nature of a deiform mind”²¹⁸. As we have noted, their mode of knowing is immediate and immaterial, and it is through this lack of division, and immateriality, and “unity after a deiform fashion [that they are] conformed to the divine which is beyond wisdom, mind, and reason”²¹⁹. It is also thus that they are enabled to express this deiformity through the activity of providence and procession; the two – i.e., knowing and providential love – being in fact simultaneous, as we recall from Dionysius’ definition of the angelic “spiral”.

Our knowledge, of course, cannot be so direct. We are forced to ascend through the things of sense²²⁰ to those which are beyond and, even then, “to circle discursively... about the truth of beings”²²¹. Nonetheless, this, too, is a real imitation of God as denoted by the same imagery of circle, spiral, and straight line as was applied to Providence and the angels. Here we should note that Dionysius is unmarked by any contempt for the “merely” sensible as a bearer of knowledge such as, for example, Plotinus occasionally exhibits²²². Divine Wisdom has “set forth certain images and likenesses [εἰκόνες καὶ ὁμοιώματα] of its divine paradigms”

215. *DN VII.2* 869AB (196:17-20).

216. *Ibid.* (196:14).

217. *Ibid.*, 869C (197:13-14).

218. *Ibid.* (197:14-16).

219. *Ibid.*, 868B (195:10-11).

220. *EH V.1.3* 504CD (106:24-107:6).

221. *DN VII.2* 868B (195:12-13).

222. Thus see *Enn.* VI.7.3. Neither, for Dionysius, is the “return” to the supra-sensible understood as a return to one’s true self (*Enn.* VI.4.16 and 9.11) and away from the “fall” of separation (*Enn.* VI.5.12). See also Armstrong, *CambHist.*, 223; and Bréhier, *Phil. of Plot.*, 42. The world under Providence, particularly the sanctified world of the hierarchies, is not for our author a “shadow theater” (*Enn.* III.2.15). Curiously, however, in his truly exalted notion of art as capable of revealing the intelligible λόγοι more clearly than the physical original, Plotinus does somewhat anticipate the *EH* (see *Enn.* V.8.1 and VI.7.22).

in the sensible world, arranged in a certain order (διάταξις)²²³. It is this ordered sequence of images that we are given to ascend in stages, ὁδῶ καὶ τάξει²²⁴, up to, and in imitation of, God's own Wisdom. The latter indeed includes within its realm, as its "last echo [ἀπήχημα]", the sensory perceptions themselves²²⁵. These are points of obvious significance for Dionysius' development of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as making present in material symbols the manifestation of divine Wisdom and the angels, its revelators²²⁶ – rather, of Providence and the latter's fulfillment of its "motion" toward us, the Incarnation of Christ.

If, unlike the angels, humans come to knowledge by a process of ascents or degrees, it is still the case for both, with respect to our second point, that knowledge *per se*, whether of the divine or of the creation, is always through the medium of the creature²²⁷. "All knowledge", Dionysius declares, "is of beings and is limited to beings", while "that which is transcendent to being is also transcendent with regard to all knowledge"²²⁸. In so far as the creature remains within the sphere of its created powers, it may then know God "by means of his participation alone"²²⁹. This is not, of course, to deny that this knowledge does convey something of God in his activities. It has a real content. The reality of every created being lies in its likeness to God and participation in him²³⁰, in the "measure" of its fulfillment of the divine λόγος addressed to it that it is called upon to reveal or "declare"²³¹. Beholding the creation, we may then be illumined with regard to the "intentions" of God respecting his creatures, to discern something of his λόγοι²³², and so arrive at the intuition of his energies that irradiate the worlds²³³. Even so, however, we are still only at the "forecourt"²³⁴ of the truly divine, the "place [τόπος]" of his abiding,

223. DN VII.3 869CD (197:20-22); see also 872B (198:15-20).

224. *Ibid.*, 869D-872A (198:1).

225. DN VII.2 868C (195:17).

226. See CH II.2 140A (11:7-19); XV.4 333A (54:20-23); and EH IV.3.7 481A (100:13-23).

227. The sole exception to this would appear to be the first order of the Celestial Hierarchy who are illumined by the divine γνῶσις itself. This, however, by no means exhausts the object of their knowledge, as is made clear by the "purification" from ignorance which they continually experience (CH VII.3 109C [30:17-31:5]).

228. DN I.4 593A (115:16-18); see also I.6 596BC (119:5-9).

229. DN II.7 645A (131:5-6).

230. For the same in Gregory of Nyssa, see Sheldon-Williams, *CambHist*, 453.

231. For the angels as "declarations" or revelations of God, see Chapter III below, 144 and note 185.

232. The discernment of the λόγοι of the world is of course a theme familiar to the pagans; see *Enn.* III.2.15 and V.1.3; and for comment, Inge, *Phil. of Plot.* vol. 1, 162 and Bréhier, *Phil. of Plot.*, 32. For Proclus, see Rostn, *Proclus*, 99 and esp. 221-222. For the theme in Origen, see Chapter VI below, 269-271, 275 and 280.

233. Indeed the whole range or "shape" of Providence; see below Chapter III, 121-134.

234. For the use of "forecourt" (προθύροισ), see CH VII.2 208A (28:21), where it is the place assigned to the first angels. For the same term in Plotinus as an expression of Νοῦς, see *Enn.* V.9.3.

and the indication of his presence (παρουσία)²³⁵.

Yet, while beginning in the creation, the process of contemplation ends neither there nor in knowledge itself:

He is hymned from all things which are according to the ἀναλογία of all things of which he is cause... [but] the most divine knowledge of God is knowing through unknowing [ἄγνοσία], according to the union [ἔνωσις] that is beyond mind, when the mind [νοῦς], leaving behind all things, then abandoning itself as well, is united to the super-luminary rays, there and thence to be shone upon by the unsearchable depth of wisdom²³⁶.

We arrive at the final sense and goal of the θεοειδής, the term – and beyond – of created being: the movement and gift of ἄγνοσία and of ἔνωσις.

C. ΕΝΩΣΙΣ: THE CREATURE EN ΕΚΣΤΑΣΕΙ

In the preceding section we discussed the creature on its own terms as the reflection and revelation of God in extension, or Providence. The rational beings particularly, *qua* creatures, are, in their being, capacity, and activity, their motion, desire, and knowing, each the image or icon – the angels in the intelligible world and humankind in the sensible realm – of the uncreated God as we have discussed him revealed in the “names” declarative of his processions. The mode of created being and motion, though, is such that it does not discover its term or τέλος within its own boundaries. There is a “vector” or “thrust” to the θεοειδής that must, if it is assented to (in the case of people), carry the reason-endowed being up and beyond the categories of created existence. We have touched on this aspect at some length in our discussion of ἔρως, κίνησις, and of λόγος/ἀναλογία. There is a dynamic inherent particularly in the latter two terms which must find its resolution in a state of being that we might call “the creature in the uncreated”, in God. The proper end of the rational creation is thus outside itself, ἐν ἐκστάσει, and the name that Dionysius assigns to this final stage of being is union, ἔνωσις.

In his book *Le Mystère de Dieu* and related articles²³⁷, Fr. Jean Vanneste has presented us with a number of valuable studies concerning what he claims to be the false ascription of mysticism to the *Areopagitica*. We are indeed indebted to his illuminating discussion of, especially, the term ἔνωσις. Of the several meanings he distinguishes for the word²³⁸, one is of primary interest to us here. Placing it at

235. MT 1.3 1000D-1001A (144:5-8); for the τόπος theme, see esp. our discussion at the end of Chapter IV below, 219-222, and Chapter VIII on Evagrius, 344-346.

236. “... ἐκ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων ὑμνεῖται κατὰ τὴν πάντων ἀναλογίαν, ὧν ἐστὶν αἴτιος... ἡ θειοτάτη Θεοῦ γνῶσις, ἡ δι’ ἀγνοσίας γνωσχομένη κατὰ τὴν ὑπὲρ νοῦν ἔνωσιν, ὅταν ὁ νοῦς τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἀποστάς, ἔπειτα καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀφείλῃ ἐνωθῇ ταῖς ὑπερφασίν ἀκτίσιν ἐκεῖθεν καὶ ἐκεῖ τῷ ἀνεξερευνήτῳ βάθει τῆς σοφίας καταλαμπόμενος”. DN VII,3 872AB (198:10-15).

237. See our Introduction above, 31, note 71, for a listing of the articles.

238. *Mystère*, esp. 187-189

the term of the triad, ἀφαίρεσις - ἄγνωσία - ἔνωσις, which he claims dominates the *MT* – and incidentally which he sees as replacing the “theurgic” triad of κάθαρσις - ἑλλαμψις - τελείωσις – he defines Dionysius’ ultimate “union” as a natural faculty of the creature enabling the latter’s union with the unknowable and transcendent. As he himself writes: “... on peut raisonnablement admettre, chez le Pseudo-Denys, l’existence d’une faculté (δύναμις) de la connaissance du Transcendant qu’il appelle ἔνωσις au-delà de l’intelligence... nous annonçons ici la doctrine dionysienne: quiconque réussit à ne plus rien connaître (τὸ μὴ γινώσκειν) par l’inconnaissance (ἄγνωσία) – résultat de l’abstraction abstraite (ἀφαίρεσις) – connaîtra au-delà de l’intelligence (ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκειν)... l’union à Dieu... tel qu’il est en soi, sera réalisée”²³⁹. Vanneste, further, sees this “faculty” as realized through the purely personal²⁴⁰ and willed effort of the human mind: “C’est l’ἀφαίρεσις qui se charge de le [i.e., l’homme] faire aboutir à cette attitude surpassant l’intelligence par la négation de toute détermination, à la simplicité absolue de l’Un transcendant. Là, l’union s’accomplit”²⁴¹. It is in accordance with the principle of “like to like” that the ἔνωσις comes into play: through the operation of ἀφαίρεσις humans ascend to unknowing and, as thereby being likened to the unknown (ἄγνωστος), they are enabled to enter into union with the transcendent Unity²⁴². Vanneste sees this remarkable symmetry as a particularly strong witness against any claims that might be put forward on behalf of Dionysius’ genuinely “mystical” character, and in favor rather of a vision of the Arcopagite as metaphysician, advocating a deliberate effort of the will, divorced from any questions of morality and the like²⁴³, to push the intelligence into conformity with the One²⁴⁴.

Now it is clear that Vanneste has hit on certain key elements in the *CD*. He is certainly correct in noting the symmetry of the Dionysian system. Neither is he alone in looking to Dionysius’ pagan predecessors for both the sources of the *MT*’s doctrine and its “automatic” or “natural mysticism”²⁴⁵. The latter is J. M. Rist’s phrase, and it features prominently in his article contrasting Dionysius’ and Proclus’ ἔνωσις as a “power to ascend... inherent” in humans with Plotinus’ mere “capacity to receive (παράδοχή)”²⁴⁶ and consequent mysticism of “grace”²⁴⁷. Rist’s

239. *Ibid.* 209 and 210-211.

240. *Ibid.* 216-217.

241. *Mystère*, 205.

242. *Ibid.* particularly 179-181 where Vanneste offers the symmetry ἄγνωσία - ἄγνωστος as the basis for Dionysius’ choice of pseudonym.

243. *Ibid.* 196-197.

244. “Théologie négative”, 414.

245. So see Koch, *Beziehungen*, 154-155 and esp. 159 on the ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ in Proclus and Dionysius’ ἔνωσις.

246. Rist, “Mysticism and Transcendence in Later Neoplatonism” *Hermes* 92 (1964) 219. Rist is here contrasting *Enn.* VI.7.35 with *DN* VII.1 865C (194.11-12). He might well have added the wonderful passage from *Enn.* V.5.8: “We must not run after It, but fit ourselves for the vision and then wait tranquilly for Its appearance, as the eye waits on the sun’s rising” (MacKenna’s translation, 56).

247. *Ibid.* 224; see also 214 where Rist repeats the assertion that union in Plotinus

contrasts, however, between even the pagans seem to us a little overdrawn. There are ambiguity and grace in both. Plotinus' rise of "the alone to the alone"²⁴⁸, and "not to something alien but to its [one's] very self"²⁴⁹, certainly suggests some sort of ontological connection awaiting, as it were, "activation"²⁵⁰. On the other hand, the *ἐνωσις* faculty in both Iamblichus²⁵¹ and Proclus²⁵² requires the gracious activity and gift of the gods²⁵³. Indeed, it was the later Neoplatonists' very distrust of the adequacy of the intellect, unlike Plotinus²⁵⁴, that led to their reliance on theurgy – i.e., prayer, among other things – to accomplish the supreme joining²⁵⁵. One can certainly not fault Dionysius for taking up whatever themes he may have rightly judged here to be in, again, convergence with Christian faith and tradition, and in this case his and the late Neoplatonists' stress on transcendence and prayer²⁵⁶.

Of course, that is not all which it is claimed he did take. Vanneste's is the strongest and most developed argument in favor of more sinister pagan borrowings and, for that reason, we should like here to note a few points concerning his essay that, in light of our argument preceding this section, seem to us to be in need of adjustment. In the first place it is not at all clear that the way of negation, while certainly given precedence in both the *DN*²⁵⁷ and the *MT*²⁵⁸ over the ascription of positive attributes (*καταφάσεις*) to God, necessarily and by itself – i.e., as the sort of metaphysical "trampoline" that Vanneste would appear to have us believe it to be – leads to union with the God who is "above both all assertions and all negations"²⁵⁹. Secondly, and in connection with the "by itself", Vanneste has seemingly overlooked – or failed to explain adequately – the markedly passive terminology Dionysius employs in describing the final leap into union. A notable

occurs on the One's "own terms" while at the same time admitting, with regard to *Enn.* VI.9.4 that "there is within *Νοῦς* a kind of unity derived from the One's transcendence".

248. *Enn.* VI.7.34 and 9.11.

249. *Enn.* VI.9.11.

250. Thus see the following articles: Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One" *Class.Q.* 22 (1926) 141 for the "like to like" symmetry of negation and union in Plotinus; R. Arnou, "La contemplation chez les anciens philosophes" *DSp* II.1727 and 1737; and J. Trouillard, "Raison et Mystique chez Plotin" *REA* (1974) 15.

251. See *de Myst.* V.26 and I.3; and Larsen, *Jamblique*, 154.

252. See his *In Tim.* 211.24 and Gersh, *Κίνησις*, 34-35.

253. Thus see the ἀποδόνος of the gods' gift in *de Myst.* III.17 and, in Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* I.25 (Saffrey/Westerink) 111.

254. See Armstrong, "Escape from the One", 186.

255. See Iamblichus, *de Myst.* II.10; III.13; and IV.2; together with Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* I.25, 113; and Beierwaltes comment, *Proklos*, 393-394, and Zintzen, "Die Wertung von Mystik", 95.

256. Thus see *DN* III.1 680B-D (138:1-139:16); here below we rise to God *via* πανάγνοις... εὐχαῖς (138:8).

257. For example, *DN* XIII.3 981B (230:1-5).

258. *MT* I,2 1000B (143:4-7).

259. *Ibid.* (143:7).

example of the latter may be found in the description Dionysius gives of his mentor, Hierotheos:

... whether he received [this knowledge] from the sacred theologians, whether he took [it] from the scientific searching of the Scriptures... whether indeed he was initiated by a more divine inspiration, not only learning but suffering divine things such that, out of the sympathy he had for these things (if one may so speak), he was perfected in their untaught and mystical unity and faith²⁶⁰.

This appears to be somewhat distant from the language of a professor of metaphysics. It is noteworthy, too, that elsewhere Dionysius speaks of Hierotheos experiencing God specifically in the context of prayer²⁶¹. To “suffer the divine” suggests, in any case, an active power at work that does not originate within us. This brings us to our third point: Vanneste scarcely mentions, and only then in a sense contrary to the text, the notion of the uncreated energies. For him, the divine “names” of the *DN* refer rather to the “created forms” by which we know God²⁶². We have labored to stress the centrality of the distinction, essence/energies, for the whole of Dionysius’ thought²⁶³. Without this distinction, given instead static, created forms – in short, the Platonist *κόσμος νοητός* – it would indeed be correct to interpret the *CD* in a Neoplatonic sense, and see its “mysticism” as a “natural” one. Such, however, would be alien to its thought. It would eliminate, for one, the *συνεργία* that is assumed throughout the corpus, the Dionysian intuition of the ascent and increasing assimilation to God that alone renders meaningful the final leap into *ένωσις*. The real possibility of divine-human compenetration depends on the notion of God’s *δυνάμεις* at work within us and increasingly conforming us to him. The uncreated energies are no less fundamental to the idea of creaturely *έκστασις* and *ένωσις* than we have seen them to be with regard to the whole of created being, activity, and knowledge. At the heart of our *έκστασις/ένωσις*, as at the heart of created providence and knowing, lies the dynamism of the Dionysian *θεοειδής*, the thrust or vector of the *ἀναλογίαι* toward their *λόγοι* in the divine processions, and the power, at once sustaining and drawing us toward itself, of the divine “wills” and love at work

260. “... είτε πρὸς τῶν ἱερῶν θεολόγων παρείληφεν εἴτε καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐπιστημονικῆς τῶν λογίων ἐρεῖνης... εἴτε καὶ ἐκ τινος ἐμνήθη θειότερας ἐπιπνοίας οὐ μόνον μαθὼν, ἀλλὰ καὶ παθὼν τὰ θεῖα καὶ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὰ συμπαθείας, εἰ οὕτω χρὴ φάναι πρὸς τὴν ἀδίδακτον αὐτῶν καὶ μυστικὴν ἀποτελεσθεὶς ένωσιν καὶ πίστιν”. *DN* 11.9 648AB (133:15-134:4); for the importance of the expression, *πάθων τὰ θεῖα*, and its significance as declarative of the divine grace in Maximus Confessor, see Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 153, and Thunberg, *Microcosm*, 431-432 and 450.

261. *DN* 111.2 681C-684A (141:1-17); and more specifically still, the context here is liturgical prayer – see Chapter IV below, 219-222. Note also the expression, *κοινωνίαν πάσχων* (684A [141:12]).

262. *Mystère*, 38-39.

263. See Lossky, *Vision of God*, 102.

within us. The ἔκστασις/ένωσις represents, indeed, the meaning and goal of the whole process, and of this chapter. As such, it merits further discussion. We will proceed in the order of the three points just noted.

1. Ἀφαίρεσις - ἀπόφασις: impelling force

The process of negation, ἀφαίρεσις, cannot be taken in isolation from everything that precedes the final act of union. It is instead a necessary aspect of that process of likening sketched above. Necessary, we hasten to add, not in any involuntary or deterministic sense, but rather that, in the course of its free assent to conformity with the λόγος of God directed to it, the reason-endowed being discovers itself obliged, on the plane of its own powers, to exercise a continual negation of any and all attributes taken from creation and applied to God. In so far indeed as the “motion” of the rational creature involves a continual ascent, an ever-deepening penetration into the realities undergirding the creation, so, too, it requires a continuous negation, which is the same as to say a progressive abandonment of each successive level of understanding at which it finds itself. Ἀφαίρεσις is a fundamental aspect of the creature’s appropriation of the divine from the very beginnings of its ascent. It is therefore present at every stage of the Dionysian anagogy – as may be noted in the text dealing with the properties of human κίνησις: the “circular” movement requires a motion “away” from exterior things and the “direct” proceeds “from” the extrinsic “into” unified contemplation²⁶⁴. Roques thus rightly speaks of the necessity of the creature’s anagogy corresponding to God’s condescension, of all symbol and discourse charged with the divine and, because so charged, pointing beyond itself to the divine reality that surpasses it and thereby continually schooling the intelligence to press on yet further²⁶⁵. Far, then, from being an isolated technique, ἀφαίρεσις/ἀπόφασις – just as the MT itself is present at the heart of every treatise in the *CD*²⁶⁶ – is in fact the ever-present corrective at all levels of knowing. Rather, it is both corrective and catalyst, or spark, impulsion, compelling us to move ever higher and thus itself essentially partaking of the quality of συνεργία as almost a synonym for our response to God’s mystery, and as indeed suggesting that mystery at work in us. It is for this reason that Dionysius can speak of the sacred writers preferring

... the ascent through negations inasmuch as it takes the soul out [or: drives it out, deprives it of: ἐξιστώσα] of things akin to it and leads [it] up through all the divine intellections, beyond all of which is that which is above every name and every reason and knowledge, and joins us, so far as we are able to be joined to him²⁶⁷.

264. *DN* IV.9 705AB (153:10-154:6); “away” (153:10-11), “into” (154:5-6).

265. *L’Univers*, 208-209.

266. The MT is present in but does not dissolve the symbols; see above, Chapter I, 70-74, and below, Chapter IV, 181ff and esp. 222-229.

267. “... τὴν διὰ τῶν ἀποφάσεων ἀνοδὸν προτετιμῆκασιν ὡς ἐξιστώσαν τὴν ψυχὴν τῶν ἑαυτῇ συμφύλων καὶ διὰ πασῶν τῶν θείων νοήσεων ὁδεύουσιν, ὧν ἐξήρηται τὸ ὑπέρ

2. Πάθων τὰ θεῖα: the discovery of a presence

With the notions of “impulsion” and “being joined” – and we ask the reader to note the voice of συνάπτεσθαι – we arrive at the second of our three points, and also a second aspect of the ἀφαίρεσις/ἀπόφασις: the markedly passive character of the vocabulary Dionysius employs whenever union with the divine comes under discussion. Ἀφαίρεσις/ἀπόφασις cannot, as we have just hinted, simply be viewed as a philosophical technique or even as wholly an exercise of our created powers. No less than at every other stage of the creatures’ ascent, it is a product of that cooperation with God which pervades the Dionysian vision of God and world. It is of a piece with the steady growth into deformity or, as it were, “transparency” to the divine that we have been outlining.

In his article “Amour et extase”, G. Horn draws the specific connection between ἀφαίρεσις and ἔρως: “Ne pourrait-on pas schématiser la pensée de Denys à peu près ainsi: ἔρως = ἔκστασις = ἀφαίρεσις = γνῶφος? L’amour arrache hors de soi; cet arrachement porte à la négation, qui n’est autre que la ténèbre de l’intelligence, et l’amour pénètre la ténèbre qu’il a engendré”²⁶⁸. We would add to this statement two qualifications: it is too static and focuses too exclusively on the creature. All of the terms listed have their reference in God as well, the γνῶφος at once to his ineffable presence and supreme unknowability, his “mystery”, and the first three all to the same, active power of his love – thus the dynamism which finds, again, its origins in him. Dionysius can therefore speak of God’s φιλανθρώπια condescending to us and, “in the manner of a fire, likening the things united by means of the union [ἔνωσις] with himself, in accordance with their capacity for deification [θέωσις]”²⁶⁹. It is the presence and activity above all of the divine ἔρως working in creation that supports and lends its thrust to the creature’s ἀφαίρεσις²⁷⁰. Dionysius’ call for a “cessation” of our natural activities is to be understood then in the context of God’s shining always more radiantly through us. Our energies cease at this point and give way to the “impulsions”²⁷¹ of divinity. We then “suffer” God. This is the second and ultimate sense of ἀφαίρεσις. Dionysius therefore insists that “we may apply ourselves [ἐπιβάλλομεν] to the super-essential ray” only through putting to rest, stopping, those intellectual capacities which are

πᾶν ὄνομα· καὶ πάντα λόγον καὶ γνῶσιν, ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων δὲ τῶν ὅλων αὐτῷ συνάπτουσιν, καθ’ ὅσον καὶ ἡμῖν ἐκεῖνω συνάπτεσθαι δυνατόν”. *DN* XIII.3 981B (230:1-5); see also *CH* II.3 140D-141A (12:17-13:3); and more generally II.1-4 136D-144C (9:16-15:7).

268. G. Horn, “Amour et Extase”, 287.

269. *EH* II.2.1 393A (70:6-7).

270. This is precisely the point affirmed by Bernard, “La doctrine mystique de Denys l’Aréopagite” *Greg* 68 (1987) 523-566, esp. 561-563; and denied by Rorem’s description of a “loveless” ascent, *Commentary*, 192, 216-222. Rorem is justified in pointing to the fact that ἔρως is not mentioned by name in the *MT*, but he also acknowledges (indeed, drew our attention to) the importance of the passive voice. What else can this passive note indicate other than the ἔρως that Dionysius had earlier (in *DN* IV especially) said was the impelling force of the universe?

271. *DN* IV.11 708D (156:15-19).

natural to us²⁷², since those minds that are in process of being united (ἐνούμενοι) to “the light beyond deity” may do so uniquely through this cessation²⁷³. Far from being a purely logical peeling-away of forms from the transcendently formless, ἀφαίρεσις becomes rather a declaration of praise, the affirmation of a state in process of realization. All the “nots”, the negations of *MT V* with which we opened this thesis are in aid simply of this: that all, everything, must fall away in order to reveal, “suddenly”, *HE*²⁷⁴. Ἀπόφασις is not a “trampoline”. It is instead the discovery and declaration of a *presence* surpassing speech. Thus we find that Moses in *MT I.3*, “in accordance with the greater [faculty], being united to the wholly unknowable through a stilling [ἀνενεργησία] of all knowledge, [and who] even in knowing not at all, knows in manner beyond mind”²⁷⁵.

3. Ἐνωσις: present reality and future hope

a) In the likeness of the divine ἔκστασις

The “in accordance with the greater [κατὰ τὸ κρείττων]” of the text above brings us to our third point and the conclusion of this chapter: the meaning of that state whose process of realization the “suffering” of God works, our ἔνωσις. At this point let us recall the sense of ἔνωσις in reference to God. It expresses the *in se* of divinity, that unity of God in trinity which is transcendent to all unities whatsoever, whether of bodies, souls, or of the angels²⁷⁶, and which enjoys a certain priority over the unified multiplications of the πρόοδοι or διακρίσεις²⁷⁷. If ἔνωσις is then proper to God *in se* and διάκρισις or multiplicity to God *ad extra* or in ἐν ἑκστάσει, then precisely the opposite is the case with created being where multiplicity, however – as with the angels – refined, is the proper, and unity, oneness, the peculiarity of the state ἐν ἑκστάσει. Indeed, here we arrive at an element in the symmetry of the Dionysian scheme which to our knowledge has so far been overlooked: the ἔνωσις or “highest” faculty is precisely the analog in the creature to διάκρισις in God, to his “ecstatic” capacity that gives rise to the divine processions. According to that “faculty”, therefore, “we are joined in a manner beyond knowledge and utterance to things unutterable and unknowable in accordance with that ἔνωσις which is greater than our faculties of discourse and intellection”²⁷⁸. Roques is justified in speaking of the “meeting of two ecstasies”²⁷⁹,

272. *DN I.4* 592D (115:9) and *II.7* 645A (131:3-4).

273. *DN I.5* 593C (116:15-117:1).

274. *Ibid.* see Chapter IV below for ἐξαίφνης 222-229.

275. “... τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ τῇ πάσης γνώσεως ἀνενεργησία κατὰ τὸ κρείττον ἐνούμενος καὶ τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκων”. *MT I.3* 1001A (144:13-15).

276. *DN II.4* 641C (128:3-7).

277. *DN II.11* 652A (137:5-6).

278. “... τοῖς ἀφθέγκτοις καὶ ἀγνώστοις ἀφθέγκτως καὶ ἀγνώστως συναπτόμεθα κατὰ τὴν κρείττονα τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς λογικῆς καὶ νοερᾶς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐνεργείας ἔνωσιν”. *DN I.1* 585B-588A (108.35); see also *VII.1* 865C-868A (194.10-15); *VII.3* 872B (198.12-15); and *XI.2* 949CD (219:3-11).

279. “Symbolisme et théologie négative” *BAGBI* (1957) 112.

for ἔκστασις is here the common term. Our conformity to God in the imitation of his love, or sharing rather in it, attains thus its term in the sharing of and likeness to his ἔκστασις. Just as he departs from himself in order to enter into relation, so the creature is constrained, in obedience to the very thrust of its being, to transcend itself in union with the “rays of the unapproachable light”²⁸⁰.

b) The divine energies and ἔνωσις as our *capax Dei*

The “rays” of God, and the “sightless impulsions” noted already several times, point to another essential feature of the creaturely ἔκστασις/ἔνωσις: it, too, is finally a revelation of, and participation in, the divine energies. It is God who acts in us: from the thearchy, “as a unifying power, we are made one [ἐνιζόμεθα]... and gathered together into a deiform unity and unity imitative of God”²⁸¹. As opposed to Rist’s natural power within the creature, we would say thus that ἔνωσις signifies rather the capacity or openness of the creature to being filled with the divine δυνάμεις. If the ἔνωσις in the passage just cited might be seen as a wholly natural feature of created being and an expression of the same²⁸², it would appear to us that there can be little doubt as to its ecstatic nature and the primary role of God in the following:

One must be aware that our mind has, on the one hand, the faculty of intellection through which it sees the intelligibles, and, on the other hand, [the ἔνωσις] which transcends the nature of the mind and through which the latter is joined to things beyond itself. It is in this manner, then, that we must conceive divine things, not in a way proper to our own nature, but as completely putting ourselves outside of ourselves and becoming wholly of God, for the highest is of God and not of ourselves²⁸³.

It is given to each creature, as we noted above, to become the likeness of God through “God-given capacity and grace”²⁸⁴. Dionysius speaks again elsewhere of there “coming to be many gods” through the deification deriving from the one God by means of a realization of “the potential [δύναμις] for deiformity proper to each”²⁸⁵. Ἐνωσις is thus the final actualization – through God’s power of

280. *DN* IV.11 708D (156:18); for light imagery in this context, see also I.5 593C (116:15-117:3); VII.3 872B (198:14); and Chapter I above, 35-36, notes 98 and 102.

281. *DN* I.4 589D (112:12-14).

282. See *DN* II.4 641C (127:16-128:7), where Dionysius speaks of a variety of different “unities” on the planes of body, soul, and intellect (= the angels), all of which constitute participations, according to ἀναλογία, in God’s unity.

283. “Δέον εἰδέναι τὸν καθ’ ἡμᾶς νοῦν τὴν μὲν ἔχειν δύναμιν εἰς τὸ νοεῖν, δι’ ἧς τὰ νοητὰ βλέπει, τὴν δὲ ἔνωσιν ὑπεραίρουσαν τὴν νοῦ φύσιν, δι’ ἧς συνάπτεται πρὸς τὰ ἐπέκεινα ἑαυτοῦ. Κατὰ ταύτην οὖν τὰ θεῖα νοητέον οὐ καθ’ ἡμᾶς, ἀλλ’ ὅλους ἑαυτοὺς ὅλων ἑαυτῶν ἐξισταμένους καὶ ὅλους Θεοῦ γιγνομένους, κρεῖττον γὰρ εἶναι Θεοῦ καὶ μὴ ἑαυτῶν”. *DN* VII.1 865C-868A (194:10-15).

284. *CH* III.3 168A (19:23).

285. *DN* II.11 649C (136:13).

deification – of the θεοειδής. It is the ultimate expression of the creature's ἀναλογία become transparent to its divine λόγος: “united with the super-luminary rays”²⁸⁶, “super-naturally illumined” by unity with the one God²⁸⁷ – and we note again the passive constructions. Ἐκστασις/ἔνωσις represents the completion of the “cycle” of divine love that begins in the “unsearchable” unity of the Trinity and concludes – if that is the word we want – in the sharing of created being in that same blessedness. Yet the “cycle” is not forced upon the creature, but depends always upon the latter’s assent. At all stages there is the element of cooperation, of the necessity for the creature’s agreement to the divine will or movement of love. One must will to become oneself, i.e., one’s proper λόγος, from the level of “good works”, through the ἀφαιρέσεις, to the very gift of oneself in union. One puts aside all things, πάντα ἀφελῶν²⁸⁸ – including oneself – in obedience to the growing awareness of the reality and presence within oneself of uncreated love. This reality and awareness must finally express itself in union.

c) The promise

We hesitated over the word “conclude” above because there can really be no conclusion to this process. Dionysius speaks of the “unceasing [ἄσχετος] and absolute departure [ἔκστασις] from oneself and all things in the super-essential ray of the divine darkness”²⁸⁹. Even ἔνωσις is therefore no absolute repose in God but instead a continuous ascent into his uncreated powers, into the mystery of his divine life. This infinite ascent is, precisely, the mystery of created being, i.e., of our being as the participation in, and hence revelation of, God’s mystery, our true “correspondence” to the divine infinity. Immediately we say “our” and an obvious difficulty emerges. As we noted concerning κίνησις above, our ascent, unlike that of the angels, is clearly limited by the constraints of mortality and, as also hinted, of other limitations deriving from our present mode of existence in a world where evil remains a possibility. Whatever glimpses of beatitude we may then enjoy here below can only be momentary and fleeting. If our ἔνωσις is truly to occur, to fulfill itself, then it must also promise some change in the way things presently are. We must look forward to a transfiguration of our present ways of being, toward a more, as it were, angelic estate. The term has thus a necessarily eschatological dimension, and this is in fact exactly what Dionysius does state clearly. If it is the case that now, in this life, we may only taste briefly of blessedness, still:

Then, when we become immortal and incorruptible and attain to the most blessed and Christ-like condition, ‘we shall ever,’ as Scripture says, ‘be with the Lord,’ being filled, on the one hand, with the all-pure contemplations of his visible theophany – shining round about us in plainest brilliancies – the

286. *DN* V11.3 872B (198:14).

287. *DN* I.5 593C (117:2-3).

288. *MT* I.1 1000A (142:10-11).

289. *Ibid.* (142:9-10).

same which shone about his disciples in that most divine transfiguration – participating, on the other hand, in his intelligible gift of light through minds grown passionless and immaterial, and finally sharing in the *ἔνωσις* which is beyond mind through the unknowable and blessed impulses of the super-luminary rays, in more divine imitation of the heavenly minds, for, as the truth of Scripture declares, ‘We shall be equal to the angels and sons of God,’ [we] who are sons of the Resurrection’²⁹⁰.

Here is fulfilled the promise with which we began this chapter, and resolved the “tension” we discussed in *λόγος - ἀναλογία*. God created all things in love and wills their communion with himself. For us, this motion of God and our own striving to conformity with and in it discover, both, their point of meeting and resolution in Christ. The imperatives of our nature require that God become incarnate.

Summary: We have come full circle from the beginnings of Chapter I. Taking as our point of departure the “silence” and “ecstasy” in God’s ineffable transcendence, we have followed the course of his descent via his energies into immanence, noted the creation of beings other than himself through his will and Providence, sketched the creature’s assent to the reflection of, and growth into, his image that is built into the very depths of created being – the will or intention (*λόγος*) of God for each – and have found ourselves at the conclusion of our discussion, having traced the course of those uncreated “vectors” implanted in the rational creation, once again confronted with the same mystery of divine transcendence and creaturely *ἔκστασις* with which we began.

The circle has indeed closed, but, as compared with the Neoplatonists, it is a circle with a difference, infinite at both its “ends”. The mystery of the creature’s *ἔκστασις* and *ἔνωσις* is the final resolution of a single moving power and a single mystery: the love of God. The divine *ἔρως* stirs the transcendent into immanence, establishes the creation and, ever present within the latter, works in and through created beings to maintain and draw them back to itself. It does so by means of that likeness to itself implanted in the creature which must ever seek its source, and end, in the Creator. This dynamism, inherent in the Dionysian *λόγος/ἀναλογία*, declares at once the CD’s break with its pagan predecessors and its debt to

290. “Τότε δέ, ὅταν ἄφθαρτοι καὶ ἀθάνατοι γενώμεθα καὶ τῆς χριστοειδοῦς καὶ μακαριωτάτης ἐφικώμεθα λήξεως, πάντοτε σὺν Κυρίῳ, κατὰ τὸ λόγιον, ἐσόμεθα, τῆς μὲν ὁρατῆς αὐτοῦ θεοφανείας ἐν πανάγνοις θεωρίαις ἀποπληρούμενοι φανοτάταις μαρμαρυγαῖς ἡμᾶς περιουγαζούσης, ὥς τοὺς μαθητὰς ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ θειοτάτῃ μεταμορφώσει· τῆς δὲ νοητῆς αὐτοῦ φωτοδοσίας ἐν ἀπαθεί καὶ ἁύλῳ τῷ νῷ μετέχοντες καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ νοῦν ἐνώσεως ἐν ταῖς τῶν ὑπερφανῶν ἀκτίνων ἀγνώστοις καὶ μακαρίαις ἐπιβολαῖς. Ἐν θειοτέρῳ μιμήσει τῶν ὑπερουρανίων νοῶν ἰσάγγελοι γάρ, ὡς ἡ τῶν λογίων ἀλήθειά φησιν, ἐσόμεθα καὶ υἱοὶ Θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες”. DN 1.4 592BC (114:7-115:5). See our article, “On the Other Hand” SVTQ 34,4 (1990) 305-323, esp. 310-316 on the eschatological character of this passage, and the experience of beatitude as including all aspects – body and soul – of the human composite.

patristic thought, in particular to the writings of Gregory of Nyssa. The created being as icon of the divine, and as microcosmos, is not now fully achieved but looks forward to its τέλος as to an activity always and increasingly in process of realization.

The last statement leads us on to certain further points, and to the chapters following. We have dealt so far with the "dry bones" of Dionysius' thought, the bare theory of God's descent as Providence and the properties he has given created existence for the appropriation of that descent. Created being, however, does not exist *in vacuo*. Angels and humans both live in a world, and through their world move to union with the Maker of worlds. This is implicit in the notion of ἀναλογία itself which, as we have seen, points rather to a whole web of relationships than to splendid isolation. Here, too, we mark a departure from the loneliness and self-completeness of Plotinus' microcosmos. We shall also, in the succeeding chapters, note the adaptation which Dionysius has effected here of prior Christian handlings of the micro-macrocosmos theme, chiefly that of the great Origen and his disciple, Evagrius. For the Areopagite, the microcosmos of the particular rational being is both reflected in, and completed by, the macrocosmos of a community of minds – or, rather, of entire planes of existence: for the angels the intelligible sphere, and for humanity the sensible.

We have arrived at the point where we must take up the discussion of the hierarchies that constitute the, as it were, "flesh and blood" of Dionysius' vision. The latter phrase we use deliberately in that it recalls that towards which the entire *CD* as sketched so far increasingly moves: the Incarnation of God in Christ. Jesus is the true – or "natural" – end and center of the double motion of God into world, and of world into God. He is also the reply of divine Providence to those needs and wants in our present mode of being that prevent our infinite ascent.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERY OF THE WORLDS: HIERARCHY AND HIERARCHIES

Introduction: Created being is by its nature contingent being. It depends upon its source in the Creator and exists within a particular context. By context we mean world or universe, since it is in and through its world that each reasonable being receives its definition and attains to the knowledge of itself, of others, and of God. For Dionysius the reality of the created worlds is both realized and revealed in the two hierarchies, the Celestial and Ecclesiastical. The two verbs, realize and reveal, denote the double and simultaneous function of a given hierarchy: 1) the reason-endowed being, whether human or angel, discovers within its respective hierarchy its own true place or meaning, i.e., its reality; and 2) through or by means of its hierarchy, each is given to rise to the conscious and active apprehension of that same reality and so to the contemplation of the latter's source in God. As both the meaning of the created world and the revelation within that meaning of the Creator, hierarchy represents the "pivot" of the Dionysian system. It is the point in the cycle of love we discussed above at which the descent of God's *δυνάμεις* into creation becomes the ascent of the creature into God.

We note, again, that in using the word "cycle" we do not intend any sort of eternally realized cosmos. The Dionysian world is fully a dynamic one. It is also one of fundamentally Christian inspiration. Dionysius' hierarchies are not a repetition of Proclus' causal *σειραί*, a "theory of ratios" or logical sequences¹. The hierarchies embrace the whole of created being, not merely differing *Seinsstufen*². While one scholar points to the various orders of being, i.e., intellective (angels), reasoning (humans), animal, vegetable, and mineral, mentioned in the DN as supporting his contention that the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy applies uniquely to humanity rather than to the entire sub-angelic creation crowned by humanity³, we find the same categories of being in patristic writings, especially those of Gregory of Nyssa⁴. The Nyssene's vision of the Church as the presence here and

1. Vs. Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, 48-50.

2. Vs. Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 36, 76.

3. *Ibid.*

4. See Chapter VII, 305, note 182.

now of the new creation in Christ is not, however, affected⁵. No more do Dionysius' lists limit the role of "our hierarchy", the Church, in his own theology which, as we have already stressed, owes much to the thought of St. Gregory.

Besides Nyssa, we shall also have in mind the thought of Origen and Evagrius, especially their understanding of the created world as at once the providential manifestation of God and the reflection of humanity⁶. For them, as for the Areopagite, hierarchy (the sanctified cosmos) both embraces all and can be embraced by each. "All" and "each" also provide us with a reply to the apparently rigid character of Dionysius' universe and the clue as to how he can maintain, as we shall see, both that knowledge comes down uniquely via the sequence of hierarchic ranks and, still, that the direct encounter with God is open to all who participate in the mystery of "our hierarchy". Mystery and icon are once more the keys to the Areopagite's world. Hierarchy is, first, the mystery or sacrament of God's presence and activity on a given plane of being. Secondly, it is for us the image of humanity and, specifically, of humanity redeemed. Dionysius' vision of a redeemed creation, one in which created being is to become fully obedient to its "natural" calling, is the product, thirdly, of Christian revelation and reflection. The world as sanctified, fully "natural", comes to us uniquely through Christ. Jesus is the τόπος Θεοῦ, and in him redeemed humanity and hallowed cosmos at once reflect one another and become, both, the "place of meeting" with God.

Our points above will, we trust, emerge over the course of this chapter and the following one. We have divided Chapter III, the Mystery of the Worlds, into two sections: we discuss first the notion of hierarchy in general, taking Dionysius' own definition of the term as order, activity, and knowledge, and, deeply indebted to René Roques' analysis in *L'Univers Dionysien*, strive to see each in the light of our remarks concerning realization and revelation. We shall dwell particularly on the dynamism of the Dionysian world, its source in God's own activity, and at the same time endeavor to point towards the Incarnation as the focus and validation of Dionysius' vision of nature, his φυσιολογία or φυσική θεωρία. We then outline, secondly, the salient characteristics of the angelic and human hierarchies, with particular concentration upon the latter. Our discussion of the Church's ordering will lead us into Chapter IV, our argument concerning the Fall, Incarnation, sacraments, and the Church's order, activity, and knowledge as the image both of humanity and the sacramental icon of God. Thus in Chapters V-IX we shall be prepared to show the sources of Dionysius' basic thought concerning the world and Christ as owing less to the pagan thinking than to the thought of Origen and Evagrius, Gregory of Nyssa, the mystagogues of the fourth century, and important contributions from the writers of what we take to be the Areopagite's homeland in Syria.

5. *Ibid.* 278-279.

6. Chapter VI, 274-277 and VIII, 334-338.

A. THE DEFINITION OF HIERARCHY

Dionysius gives us his most important definition of hierarchy in CH III.1:

Hierarchy, in my opinion, is a sacred order, and knowledge, and activity, assimilated, so far as possible, to the divine likeness, and led up in due degree to the illuminations given it from God for the imitation of God⁷.

We find several, as it were, familiar faces. Let us begin with one of the last, ἀναλόγως, in order to approach the first.

1. A sacred order: hierarchy as τάξις

a) The analog of Providence and reality of the created worlds

We recall from our last chapter that ἀναλογία, together with the notion of the λόγοι, occupies a crucial position in Dionysius' vision of created being. Both terms, as we saw, indicate potential and process rather than a fixed state⁸. It is of the utmost importance to bear in mind the dynamic quality inherent in the two terms in order to grasp properly the Dionysian use of the word, τάξις, when defining the nature of hierarchy. The latter expression is intimately related to both the former. All three terms, no less with respect to the worlds of creation than to each creature on its own⁹, refer to the same active and sustaining power of the divine will, of God's love at work in creation.

When we declare the sacred τάξις of hierarchy to be the order willed by God for any particular level of being, whether bodiless or incarnate created spirit (i.e., angels or humans), we do not mean to suggest a purely rational σειρά of descending causes and effects, i.e., the sense of τάξις for the late Neoplatonists¹⁰. The τάξις of Dionysius is indeed grounded on the divine decree or law, θεσμός (an expression to which we shall return shortly), and proceeds through a series of triads¹¹, but to characterize this in the CD as simply the universal law of rational order¹² quite misses the essential in the Arcopagite's world. It lacks the element, and mystery, of synergy. Neither do "rational principles"¹³ do justice to the Dionysian λόγοι which are, more fully, the "intentions" or "purposes" of God

7. "Ἔστι μὲν ἱεραρχία κατ' ἐμὲ τάξις ἱερὰ καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἐνέργεια πρὸς τὸ θεοειδὲς ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοιούμενη καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἐνδιδομένας αὐτῇ θεόθεν ἐλλάμψεις ἀναλόγως ἐπὶ τὸ θεομίμητον ἀναχθῆναι". CH III.1 164D (17:3-5).

8. For comment here, see von Semmelroth, "Συμβολικὴ θεολογία", 6 and Lossky, "Darkness and Light", 41.

9. For τάξις and the individual creature, see Ep. VIII.1 1088C (176:2,3); VIII.3 1093B (183:3,6,7); and VII.4 1093C (183:15-184:1).

10. For the equivalence of τάξις and σειρά in Proclus, see Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 141-142.

11. See CH X.1 273AB (40:8-18); IV.3 181A (22:18-22); and, for comment, Roques, *L'Univers*, 36-39.

12. Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, 38ff.

13. *Ibid.* 50.

active in creation. When λόγος is understood primarily in the latter sense, the following text concerning the hierarchical distribution of creaturely participation in God takes on a character other than logical sequence:

The ordering principle of all visible and invisible harmony, in accordance with the same purpose of the natural good order, supernaturally manifests the splendor of its own gift of light in radiant outpourings to the highest beings and, through them, the beings after them participate in the divine ray¹⁴.

The “principle of order”, together with its λόγος, expresses less a purely natural law – note the ὑπερφυῶς – than of God in extension, of the divine purpose for the whole of creation.

The single λόγος of the hierarchies as the ground of their τάξις would thus signify, first, their purpose or meaning, and, secondly, that meaning as equivalent to the same active power of the Good that “above all rest and motion establishes each [creature] in its own λόγος and stirs it to its proper motion”¹⁵. This universal ordering of all creation in accordance with the divine intent for each is not just ascribed to the first name of God as Providence. We also hear it echoed in Dionysius’ definition of the divine δύναμις¹⁶, Justice¹⁷, and Salvation, which latter “preserves all things, as ordered in accord with the λόγοι of each”¹⁸. The names of God are summed-up, recapitulated, in the τάξις of the hierarchies. Their single would in fact appear to be Providence itself, i.e., the whole range of God’s activities in relation to the created worlds, God himself in extension. The Trinity can therefore be called the principle of hierarchy¹⁹ insofar as it is the source of the divine energies. The Trinity in general, but in particular the second Person must be identified with “Salvation” and “Redemption”²⁰, God’s action to restore what is lacking and lead his creature back to the state for which it was intended²¹. Jesus is himself “the intent [ἐπίνοια] of every hierarchic revelation”²², as well as “the principle, essence and most Thearchic power of all hierarchy, sanctification, and divine work [θεουργία]”²³. We shall return in more detail to the role of Christ. For

14. “Ἡ πάση εὐκοσμίας δρατῆς καὶ ἀοράτου ταξιαρχία τῆς οικείας φωτοδοσίας λαμπρότητα πρωτοφανῆς ἐν πανολβίαις χύσει ταῖς ὑπερτάταις οὐσίαις ἀναφαίνει καὶ διὰ τούτων αἱ μετ’ αὐτῶν οὐσίαι τῆς θείας ἀκτίνος μετέχουσιν”. *CH XIII.3* 301C (45:15-18).

15. *DN IV.7* 704C (153:1-3).

16. *DN VIII.5* 892C (202:6-9).

17. *DN VIII.7* 896B (204:18-21).

18. *DN VIII.9* 896D-897A (205:16-206:4).

19. *EH I.3* 373CD (66:6-8). See also Stiglmayr, “Über die Termini Hierarch und Hierarchie” *ZKT* 22 (1898) 182-183.

20. *DN VIII.9* 896D-897C (205-207).

21. See, for example, *DN I.4* 592AB (113:6-12).

22. *CH II.5* 145C (16:17-19).

23. *EH I.1* 372A (63:12-64.2).

now we wish to stress that hierarchy as a λόγος expresses both the will of God for all of created being, and, in the case of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, of his grace in the divine condescension of Christ. The “principle” of the hierarchies, therefore, is the divine love present in created nature and revealed to humanity in the Incarnation.

If the λόγος of hierarchy is to be identified with God’s Providence, what may be said of its ἀναλογία, understanding the latter as the presence of its λόγος in the creature? Clearly, a hierarchy must be the analog of Providence, the entirety of the latter’s expression on a given plane of being. Recalling our reference above to the divine Justice, this point emerges clearly in the following:

The deiform hierarchy is filled with sacred justice, and administers that which each deserves in a saving manner, granting in due time and sacred manner each one’s share in divine things in accordance with due measure and analogy²⁴.

As Lossky rightly observes, “it is analogia which is the pivot of all hierarchy, of all order” or συμμετρία²⁵. Τάξις and ἀναλογία are inseparably linked, and it is indeed ἀναλογία and ἀναλόγως that we find throughout the CD, whether included in the definitions of perfection²⁶, of the measure of each being’s share in the divine wisdom²⁷, or of the cooperation with God²⁸, the activity of a hierarchy in distributing God’s illuminations²⁹, or communion³⁰, or activities³¹, or knowledge³². The “ray” of the uncreated energies proceeds to all creation ἀναλόγως³³, and thus, ἀναλόγως, do the first ranks of angels receive it³⁴ and pass it on to those below³⁵, such that ultimately it reaches us through “sacred veils”³⁶ in order that we may enjoy the same divine ray in imitation of the angelic orders³⁷ through a series of ordered ranks³⁸. All is given in accordance with the “thearchic good order [συμμετρία]” of

24. “Ἔστι γὰρ ἡ θεοειδὴς ἱεραρχία δικαιοσύνης ἱερᾶς ἀνάπλεως καὶ τὸ κατ’ ἀξίαν ἑκάστῳ σωτηρίως ἀπονέμει, τὴν ἐναρμόνιον ἑκάστου τῶν θείων μέθεξιν ἐν συμμετρίας καὶ ἀναλογίας κατὰ καιρὸν ἱερῶς διορουμένη”. *EH* III.3.6 432C (85:3-6).

25. “Analogics”, 292. See also von Semmelroth, “Geleinte Vielheit”, 399 and “Aufstieg”, 26, as well as Roques, *L’Univers*, 64.

26. *CH* III.2 165B (18:14-15).

27. *CH* XII.2 293A (43:4-5).

28. *CH* III.3 168A (19:21-22).

29. *EH* II.3.3 400B (75:4-9).

30. *CH* IV.1 177C (20:12-13); see also *EH* IV.3.2 477C (98:25-26).

31. *CH* XIII.4 305C (48:16-18).

32. *CH* XV.3 332B (54:2-4).

33. *CH* I.2 121B (8:9-10); also XIII.3 301A (44:17-21); *EH* III.3.3 429A (82:17-21); VI.3.6 537C (120:10-12); and *DN* IV.33 733C (178:16-17).

34. *CH* VII.3 209C (30:20-22).

35. *CH* IX.1 273A (42:11-12); XI.2 285A (42:11-12); and *EH* VI.3.6 537C (120:10-12).

36. *DN* I.4 592B (114:1-4).

37. *CH* I.3 121C (8:17-19), and 124A (9:8-10); *EH* I.2 373A (65:10-13); and I.5 377A (68:2-4).

38. See *EH* IV.3.3 477A (98:3-13); V.1.1 501A (104:11-15); VI.1.3 532D (116:13-14); VI.1.5 536C (119:3-7); and VI.1.6 537C (120:10-12).

Providence³⁹, a “good order” which is reflected, as the notion of analogy, in the very being of the creature as image of Providence⁴⁰ or θεοειδής. Every divine gift is given in accordance with the hierarchies. As conformed to the likeness of providential activity, hierarchy is itself therefore θεοειδής. A hierarchy’s τάξις as the συμμετοία willed and effected by Providence can be nothing less than the ἀναλογία of God’s δυνάμεις on a given plane of being, the expression of the divine purpose. In so far as it is the expression of God’s intention for a given level, every hierarchy must also be the reality of creation at that level to which it pertains. Dionysius therefore tells us that “every hierarchy is... the entire λόγος of the sacred things [ἁερά] subordinate to it”⁴¹. By “sacred things”, we understand both the “instruments” of a hierarchy – in our case, word and sacrament – and the whole realm of being that it acts to sanctify. Τάξις in its broadest sense must then mean the God-intended reality or meaning of creation, and it is thus that we find ourselves in agreement with Roques: “La hiérarchie n’apparaît pas comme un simple élément de la synthèse dionysieenne. Elle est l’univers dionysien lui-même”⁴².

The term τάξις is not without problems. Are the variations of creation as defined by the τάξις of a hierarchy declarative of a (particularly Neoplatonic) Dionysian predestinationism? We say that they are not, but express instead the God-intended uniqueness of each being⁴³.

b) By command of God: a question of law

Dionysius insists on the divine θεσμός underlying the establishment of ranks and orders in creation:

This is the all-holy law of the Thearchy, that [the beings of the] second [rank] are to be led up to its most divine radiance through [the beings of the] first [rank]⁴⁴.

The language of “first” and “seconds” is consistent throughout the CD⁴⁵.

39. *EH* IV.3.5 480B (99:21).

40. For συμμετοία see *CH* XIII.3 301A (44:23-24); XIII.4 305A (47:22); XIV 321A (50:7); *EH* I.2 373A (65:12-13); II.1.3 400B (75:8-9); III.3.6 432C (85:5-6); IV.3.8 481B (101:2); V.1.4 504D (107:7-8).

41. *EH* I.3 373C (65:22-23).

42. *L’Univers*, 131, vs. Bruns, *Gott u.S.* 16-17.

43. See *CH* IX.3 260D (38:8-10) on μετουσία. The inequality of created beings is a given of God’s will, and there are thus varieties of participation in his φωτοδοσία. Note also Lossky’s remarks, “Darkness and Light”, 41.

44. “Θεσμός μὲν οὗτός ἐστι τῆς θεαρχίας ὁ πανίερος τὸ διὰ τῶν πρώτων τὰ δεύτερα πρὸς τὸ θειώτατον αὐτῆς ἀνάγεσθαι φέγγος”. *EH* V.1.4 504CD (106:24-25). Cf. also *CH* IV.3 181A (22:18-22).

45. See, for example, *CH* VIII.2 240D (34:15); XIII.4 305B (48:12-14); *DN* XII.4 972B (226:2-5); and *Ep.* VIII.3 1093A (182:34). For triads, see also *CH* IV.3 181A (22:16-22); and X.1 273A (40:7-11). See Chapter VIII below and the same use of firsts and seconds in Evagrius, though in the latter’s case indicating the original creation (firsts) and those things which came to be following the Fall (seconds), 325, note 42.

While such language inevitably gives rise to other questions concerning the possibility of the immediate experience of God, as well as the centrality of Christ, we shall not dwell on them at this point, save to note here that our full discussion of hierarchy as the icon of God and of humanity should reveal that Dionysius' passion for order is not so dangerous to Christian revelation as might appear from the text just cited. For now, however, we confront two questions with respect to his use of θεσμός. First of all, does this term signify simply "a translegal and transscriptural conception of universal nature law"⁴⁶ and find its origins in the speculations of pagan thought? As such it would constitute, in Gandillac's phrase, "une exigence métaphysique qui s'imposerait... à la volonté créatrice elle-même"⁴⁷.

First, τάξις/θεσμός is not a kind of philosophical nemesis overshadowing the action of even divinity itself. In the DN we find θεσμός, together with other terms for order, i.e., τάξις, κόσμος, ὅρος, subject to the distribution of God's kingship or sovereignty (βασιλεία)⁴⁸. More importantly still, we discover Dionysius denying the possibility of inquiry into the "how" of the Incarnation by declaring firmly that this took place "by means of a law other than natural"⁴⁹. God is therefore able to overrule at will laws that normally appear woven into the fabric of the natural order. His will is sovereign, and we maintain there is a connection between θεσμός and the divine will in our author's thought that, as with λόγος and ἀναλογία, makes of the philosophical expression a vehicle for Christian theology. We thus hear, for example, of the "beneficent rule [θεσμός ἀγαθός]"⁵⁰ that foresaw human subjection to the devil and so (by implication) prepared our salvation. Again, the divine θεσμός ordained (ἄπονενέμηκε) the rites of the Church as images of the Thearchy⁵¹. The θεσμός of our hierarchy "desires ἐφίησι" the instruction of penitent and catechumens⁵². Such expressions would seem to indicate that, while we may rightly understand the "rule of the natural good order" as a law or ordinance written into the structures of creation, we must balance this consideration with the qualification that this term stands equally for the God who is beyond the philosophical dichotomies of the One and the Many. The divine θεσμός determines the hierarchic τάξις, but it is also – and no less – the expression of God's sovereign love. So far as human beings are concerned, the θεσμοὶ determined for people are given in order to lead us up through the things of sense to those of the spirit (τὰ νοητὰ)⁵³ and finally to God himself. They – rather, our hierarchy – are not in conflict with, but instead the result of, the Incarnation of Christ who is himself the meaning of hierarchy.

46. Hathaway, *Hierarchy*, 45; and generally, 39ff.

47. Gandillac 159, note 3.

48. DN XI.2 969B (224:9-10).

49. "ἐτέρω παρὰ φύσιν θεσμῶ", DN II.9 648A (133:9).

50. Ep. VIII.1 1085B (172:10).

51. EH VI.1.5 505B (107:20-22).

52. EH III.3.6 432C (84:25-26).

53. EH I.5 377A (67:21-23).

Our second question concerns predestinationism. Here we maintain that hierarchic τάξις no more threatens the liberty of the creature than it does that of the Creator. The division of each level of creation into different ranks or orders is first of all expressive simply of the fact that the world made by God is varied. Dionysius describes the activity of the principles of every hierarchy as “multiplying” the simplicity of their participation in God according to the “differences [διαφορᾶς]” of their subordinates, and as “gathering together” the variety (ποικιλία) of the latter into their own simplicity after the manner of Providence (προνοητικῶς)⁵⁴. Does the fact that each being is different and assigned by the will of God to receive its share of the divine through the accomplishment of its proper task (δοῦν τὰ ἑαυτοῦ), while abiding in its proper place (ἐν τάξει)⁵⁵, mean that each is predestined by Providence to that particular end? Yes, in the sense at least that each has its own unique analog of God to fulfill and therefore its own particular place. There is not, however, any compulsion. The created intelligence is not forced willy-nilly into some arbitrary yet necessary slot in the scheme of things. Dionysius is as much a defender of created freedom as Origen⁵⁶, and the Areopagite’s hierarchies answer both to the deepest reality of each being and to the latter’s uniqueness. At the same time, hierarchic existence requires active cooperation, συνεργία. While it is true that hierarchy is not just the intelligible structure of our world but our very reality, it is also true – as we noted in the preceding chapter – that we are still free to refuse assent to our proper τάξις. To do so, however, is to reject God and thus, no less, ourselves⁵⁷. Hierarchy is a “nature law” which presupposes for its fulfillment that which is beyond nature, divine grace. It is indeed “predestination”, but a predestination that demands a willing response, one which must be earned⁵⁸. Τάξις as the expression of the providential ordinances directed to creation is finally a reality which, to quote Roques at length, discovers itself

... à la fois dans l’objectivité la plus authentique et dans l’interiorisation progressive des intelligences. Il est à la fois statique et dynamique, sociologique et spirituel... l’ordre dionysien vient de Dieu... une législation et une organisation dont les termes θεσμός, θεσμοθεσία, θεία πολιτεία, disent l’origine transcendante⁵⁹.

54. DN XI.4 972B (226:4-5).

55. See the definitions of divine Justice and Peace, DN VIII.9 896D (205:16-19) and IX.4 952CD (220:12-17) respectively. For comment, see Roques, *L’Univers*, 100.

56. For Origen on freedom, see Chapter VI below, 246-247.

57. See Roques, *L’Univers*, 39 on τάξις/θεσμός as equivalent to our deepest law of being.

58. See *Ibid.* 61ff on Dionysius’ use of the expression τὰ κατ’ ἄξιαν as the active realization, dependent on the creature’s will, of the potential inherent in the ἀναλογία. For an example of this, see *Ep.* VIII.3-4 1093B (183:1-11).

59. *Ibid.* 86.

The above quotation's concluding phrase directs us to a third constituent element, or aspect, of τάξις. As well as being the divinely "legislated" reality of created being, the Dionysian hierarchy is also and at the same time the revelation of that same reality. It is – and here we insist that Dionysius' debt to the Origenist tradition is greater than to the Neoplatonist⁶⁰ – the divinely-willed manifestation or icon (εἰκών) of God in the created world, and for us the fruit of the Incarnation whose grace it renders present and whose fulfillment it promises⁶¹.

c) Εἰκών : hierarchy as revelation and saving presence

By icon, first of all, we must not understand something purely representational or mimetic. Neither can we take it in the popular sense of symbol (a term which our author also frequently employs) as that which, like an eviscerated notion of sacrament, exists to remind the beholder of something essentially unrelated. Within the system of the CD, the icon has "ontological value. It does not obscurely imitate the ideal but rather reveals it"⁶². It is a "real presence".

For the pagan Neoplatonists the use of εἰκών or εἰδωλον for the manifestation, at a lower ontological level, of the cause in its effect is also standard practice⁶³. When, however, they speak of images, whether created by the hand of an artist⁶⁴ or of that icon of the divine which is necessarily the universe itself⁶⁵ or, more intimately, the human soul⁶⁶, they have in mind something that is either the product of natural human activity or that is inherent in the producer himself and his world⁶⁷. In no case is there any question of grace, of God's free revelation of of God's Providence is precisely the substance of everything constituting hierarchy. The "sacred order" as the icon of God is: 1) the manifestation and presence of the divine here-below; 2) the work of Christ; and 3) limited to the sanctified cosmos of the new creation in Jesus, i.e., the Church⁶⁸. Let us elaborate on each of these himself, his energies, and his will. For Dionysius, on the other hand, the free action points.

Hierarchy, Dionysius tells us,

60. For the world as revelation of God's Providence in Christ in Origen and Evagrius, see Chapters VI and VIII below, 274-279 and 324-326.

61. Recall again the eschatological promise of *DNI* 4.592BC (114:7-115:5).

62. D. N. Koutras, "Ἡ Ἐννοια τῆς εἰκόνος κατὰ τὸν Ψευδο-Διονύσιον Ἀρεοπαγίτην", *Ἐπετηρίς τῆς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, 35 (1966/67) 249.

63. Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 81 and note 269, citing Proclus, *Elements*, Proposition 65 (Dodds) 62.

64. See Plotinus, *Enn.* I.6.2 and V.8.1.

65. *Ibid.* II.9.8-9; III.2.1 and 3.18; and IV.3.11. See also Iamblichus, *de Myst.* III.27 (des Places) 136-137.

66. *Enn.* III.4.3.

67. See the article by Gerhart Ladner, "The Concept of the Image in the Greek Fathers and the Byzantine Iconoclastic Controversy" *DOP* 7 (1953) esp. 8-10.

68. See *Ibid.* 9 and Roques, "Introduction", *CH*, xlv. On this as a typically central Christian transformation of the Neoplatonist κόσμος - εἰκών theme, see Armstrong, "Man in the Cosmos", *Romanitas et Christianitas*, ed. Boer (1973) esp. 99.

... denotes in general a certain [altogether] holy order, an icon of the Thearchic beauty, sacredly working the mysteries of its proper illumination in ranks and sciences, and, so far as possible, being assimilated to its proper source⁶⁹.

All the activities of Providence are summed up or re-presented, i.e., realized or made actual, in a hierarchy whose “sacred operations”, hierurgies, are “the perfecting icons of the Thearchic δύναμις”⁷⁰. Icon thus signifies an active power, a living and sanctifying reality:

The purpose... of a hierarchy is the assimilation to, and unity with, God, possessing him as guide of every sacred science and activity, and looking as unswervingly as possible to his most divine beauty, both conforming and perfecting its participants as divine images, most transparent mirrors, and unspotted recipients of the primordial light’s Thearchic ray who, being filled in sacred manner with the radiance thus bestowed, unselfishly illumine in their turn those who follow [them] in accordance with the divine ordinances⁷¹.

We note the use of ἀγάλματα here as referring not just to the (in our case) material instruments employed by a hierarchy – to which the term can also refer⁷² – but as well to the beings themselves who constitute it⁷³. Hierarchy as τάξις or εἰκόν means that the totality of creation on a given level has been enabled to reflect divine Providence, as a “mirror”. It is therefore no surprise to discover the term θεοειδής employed most often in direct connection with the notion of hierarchy. We find, for example, “the deiform and most holy orders” of the hierarchies⁷⁴, their “deiform activities”⁷⁵ and “movement;”⁷⁶ the “deiform good

69. “... ἱεράν τινα καθόλου δηλοῖ διακόσμησιν, εἰκόνα τῆς θεαρχικῆς ὡραιότητος, ἐν τάξεσι καὶ ἐπιστήμαις ἱεραρχικαῖς, τὰ τῆς οἰκείας ἐλλάμπειως ἱερουργοῦσαν μυστήρια καὶ πρὸς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρχὴν ὡς θεμιτὸν ἀφομοιουμένην”. *CH* III.2 165B (18:11-13).

70. *EH* V.1.5 505B (107:21-22). For hierarchy as the image or images of the divine energies, see also *EH* V.1.7 508C and 508D (109:22 and 110:2).

71. “Σκοπὸς... ἱεραρχίας ἐστίν, ἡ πρὸς Θεὸν, ὡς ἐφικτὸν, ἀφομοίωσις τε καὶ ἔνωσις, αὐτὸν ἔχουσα πάσης ἱερᾶς ἐπιστήμης τε καὶ ἐνεργείας καθηγεμόνα καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ θειοτάτην εὐπρέπειαν ἀκλινῶς μὲν ὄρων ὡς δυνατόν δὲ ἀποτυπούμενος καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ θιασιώτας ἀγάλματα θεῖα τελῶν ἑσπετρα διεδέστατα καὶ ἀκηλίδωτα, δεκτικὰ τῆς ἀρχιφώτου καὶ θεαρχικῆς ἀκτίνος· καὶ τῆς μὲν ἐνδιδομένης αἴγλης ἱερῶς ἀποπληρούμενα, ταύτην δὲ αὐθις ἀφθόνως εἰς τὰ ἑξῆς ἀναλάμποντα κατὰ τοὺς θεαρχικοὺς θεσμούς”. *CH* III.2 165A (17:10-18:6).

72. See *CH* II.5 145A (16:2-3); *EH* III.3.3 428D (82:13-15); and *IV*.3.1 473B (96:2-4); as well as our section below on the “veils”, 122-128. And above, Chapter I, 74 and note 221, with regard to the Divine Names.

73. See also *EH* IV.3.1 476A (96:23-97:1).

74. *CH* II.2 140B (11:22-12:1).

75. *CH* VIII.1 237D (33:9-10).

76. *Ibid.* 240A (33:12).

order of the heavenly hierarchies”⁷⁷, the “deiform hierarch”⁷⁸ and, finally, “deiform hierarchy”⁷⁹ – in our case the result of Christ coming to restore in us the “deiform habitus”⁸⁰.

The latter leads us to our second point: “we behold every hierarchy as accomplished in Jesus”, who is “the ἀρχὴ and οὐσία of heavenly hierarchy, sanctification, and divine work”⁸¹. If divine Providence is more or less synonymous with God’s love, and if it is that same work of love which is reflected in the hierarchies, then it is supremely to Jesus as the expression of divine love that one must refer when looking for the key and ultimate sense of the Dionysian universe. All reality, reality in the last and deepest sense, meets, is held in, and proceeds from the “single, theandric”⁸² activity of Christ. To speak then, as does one critic, correctly of the icon as in a sense “the incarnation of God”, the “bridge leading from earth to heaven”⁸³, without allotting so much as a breath to the primacy or even the presence of Jesus, strikes us as singular. The sanctified world, the Church, is the icon of the Incarnation, and the latter is the fulfillment, present now, of the former’s promise.

We are brought to our third point, one which, to our knowledge, has not been stressed in recent scholarship: given the εἰκὼν of hierarchy as at once the reality of the creature and image of Providence, and given that this unity of all creation is concentrated in Jesus, we venture to say that Dionysius is referring to the same reality as that intended by St. Paul in such texts as Rom 12, 1 Cor 12:12ff, Eph 2:15ff, and Col 1:18ff. The Church is the one body of Christ, the “new man” and the restored image and likeness of God. Our “deiform ἔξις”, given us in Jesus, is then precisely our participation in the single τάξις and unique εἰκὼν of God that is “our hierarchy” – the Dionysian equivalent to the Pauline “body of Christ”. Only within this one, common organism can each soul realize its perfection and deification. This living reality is the reflection in created being of the unknowable Creator whose Providence is at once single in its processions and many in its operation, “the hierarchic εἰκὼν of divine things” that is naturally divided “into distinct orders and powers” and clearly displays “the theandric energies”⁸⁴.

77. *Ibid.* 241C (35:21-22).

78. *EH* II.3.6 401C (77:9). See also II.3.6 433B (85:23); V.1.2 501D (105:23); V.3.7 513C (113:23); VI.3.5 536D (119:10); and VII.3.11 568A (131:29) for θεοειδής and the priestly orders.

79. *EH* III.3.6 432C (85:3-4).

80. *EH* III.3.12 444B (93:9).

81. “... Ἰησοῦς... ἡ πάσης ἱεραρχίας ἀγιαστείας τε καὶ θεουργίας ἀρχὴ καὶ οὐσία καὶ θεαρχικωτάτη δύναμις”. *EH* I.1 372A (63:12-64:2).

82. *Ep.* IV 1072C (161:9-10).

83. Kourtas, “Ἡ Ἐννοια τῆς εἰκόνας”, 256. See also *Ibid.* 245, where the same scholar refers to the *CD* as the work of a pagan in “Christian costume”.

84. *EH* V.1.7 508D-509A (110:2). We have adopted the variant reading suggested in note 69 of Migne, replacing ἱεραρχικὴ τῶν θείων εἰκόνων with ἱεραρχικὴ τῶν θείων εἰκόν. For comment on the “hierarchic icon”, see von Semmelroth, “Aufstieg”, 44, and “Ausstrahlende Licht”, 493.

From the notion of icon in Dionysius as the declaration and presence of a higher reality, it follows that a hierarchy, *qua τάξις*, must also be understood as the carrier of a certain knowledge⁸⁵ or, better, as itself the object of contemplation. We move to the second element in Dionysius' definition of hierarchy.

2. The gift of light: hierarchy as sanctified knowledge (ἐπιστήμη)

a) The knowledge of creation and the true *φυσιολογία*

The created universe is made up of both sensible and intelligible components whose meaning and reality are to be discovered in the hierarchies. While that discovery is not a matter given over purely to the exercise of unaided reason, neither would it be true to say that Dionysius preaches a gnosis devoid of any connection with the creature and the latter's natural powers. Once again, hierarchic "science" depends on the balance between natural and divine, the cooperation between God and creature. We might indeed speak of a compenetration of Creator with creature that, like the nature of the union insisted upon by the Chalcedonian definition, looks toward a unity at once indivisible and unconfused (ἀσύνχυτος).

The sensible holy things are representations of the intelligible, and are both instruction and way to the latter; for the intelligible elements of a hierarchy are the principle and science of those perceived by the senses⁸⁶.

The role of the sensible creation as guide to the intelligible is the main burden of the term εἰκὼν and, still more, of σύμβολον – at least in the more narrowly limited sense of the words⁸⁷. Yet this emphasis on the role of the intelligence in interpreting the signs or symbols presented to it also applies to every level of a hierarchy with respect to the one above it. Each level is a sign or symbol – thus a revelation – to the one below. As Roques observes, this is the Procline distinction between νοητὸς (intelligible) and νοερός (intelligence in operation)⁸⁸. When confronting the hierarchies we are met with a series of contemplations, increasingly refined, that extend from the things of matter to the "gates" of divinity itself. These contemplations, this γνῶσις, brought to us in and through our hierarchy is none other than:

85. A knowledge which is surely more than Hathaway's "intelligible nature of the world order", *Hierarchy*, 120.

86. "... τὰ μὲν αἰσθητῶς ἱερὰ τῶν νοητῶν ἀπεικονίσματα καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὰ χειραγωγία καὶ ὁδός, τὰ δὲ νοητά, τῶν κατ' αἰσθησιν ἱεραρχικῶν ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμη". *EH* II.1.2 397C (74:9-11).

87. As we saw in Chapter 1 above, 48-52, εἰκὼν may refer as well to the intelligible names. The angels, too, are called icons: *CH* VIII.1 240A (33:14) and *DN* IV.22 724B (169:22-170:1). Concerning σύμβολον, it would be well to note Koutras, "Ἐννοια", 250 and 256 (esp. the last page), on symbol as signifying the "putting-together", συμβολή, of different orders of being, of matter and the divine or intelligible light. Both terms, *Ibid.* 257, signify instruction in ascent, and both communicate the power enabling ascent.

88. Roques, "Introduction", *CH*, lxviii.

the knowledge of beings as they truly are; the vision and science of the sacred truth; the inspired participation in the uniform perfection – indeed, so far as possible, in the One himself – the banquet of intelligible vision, nourishing and embracing all who are lifted up to it⁸⁹.

On the basis of this most important statement we wish to make two points. First that hierarchy is to bring the reason-endowed to the “γνώσις of beings as they truly are”. We recall from our discussions above⁹⁰ that God is “known not from his own nature... but from his disposition [διάταξις] of all things”⁹¹. This “disposition” cannot refer to other than the hierarchies. They are the analogs of Providence in creation – Providence itself being their λόγος – and embrace thus the ἀναλογία of all creatures. Hierarchy is therefore at once the carrier of all true knowledge concerning creation – and so the unique path to knowledge of God – and itself the γνώσις that it is intended to bear⁹². Through the contemplation of the ἐπιστήμη that may be said to constitute a hierarchy, one is brought to the contemplation of the hierarchy’s λόγος, i.e., the uncreated energies of God. Hierarchy is thus the true φυσικὴ θεωρία⁹³. Brons is correct: for Dionysius φυσιολογία is equivalent to theology⁹⁴.

This is not, however, a betrayal of Christian teaching. The Areopagite is once again the heir of already long-extant currents in Greek patristic thought⁹⁵. We are led to our second point: for Dionysius there is no separation or distinction to be made between “natural” and revealed truth or theology. All truth, referring again to the quotation above on γνώσις, is “sacred”. The “grace [χάρις] of knowledge”⁹⁶ comes to us from above. It is no accident that immediately after the statement on the γνώσις of beings our author declares that the “essence [οὐσία] of our hierarchy is the divinely given Scripture [τὰ θεοπαράδοτα λόγια]”⁹⁷. If the “science” of hierarchy is equivalent to the knowledge of the created universe as intended by God, this must mean knowledge of the creature as sanctified, or

89. “... ἡ γνώσις τῶν ὄντων ἢ ὄντα ἐστίν, ἡ τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀληθείας ὁρασίς τε καὶ ἐπιστήμη, ἡ τῆς ἐνοειδοῦς τελειώσεως ἐνθεος μέθεξις, αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἐνός ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἡ τῆς ἐποψίας ἐστίαις τρέφουσα νοητῶς καὶ θεοῦσα πάντα τὸν εἰς αὐτὴν ἀνατεινόμενον”. *EH* 1.3 376A (66:16-19).

90. Chapter II above, 105-108.

91. *DN* VII.3 869D (197:20-21).

92. See von Semmelroth, “Ausstrahlende Light”, 497-498.

93. Roques, *L’Univers*, 53.

94. *Gott u.S.*, 236.

95. See our discussion in Chapter VI-VIII below on Origen, 279-282, Nyssa, 310-313, and Evagrius, 333-334. All three of the above had also adopted the Platonist understanding of the world as theophany, seeing the fulfillment of the philosophers’ vision as occurring in Christ and — especially for St. Gregory — in his Church. See again Armstrong, “Man in the Cosmos”, 11.

96. *CH* IV.4 181B (22:24-25).

97. *EH* 1.3 376B (67:6-7).

redeemed. It follows that, so far as humankind is concerned, there can be no true knowledge of the world apart from that given to us by God through the revelation declared in Scripture and embodied, as it were, in the Church's structure and liturgy. The Scripture reveals theology and theurgy while the liturgy bodies it forth⁹⁸. "Theurgy" recalls, again, the work of Christ, "our most divine Providence"⁹⁹. To contemplate the creation in the hierarchies is ultimately to look upon Jesus¹⁰⁰, and, in him, the Trinity that is the goal of knowledge and revelation¹⁰¹.

b) The mind of Christ

The science of hierarchy is closed to those outside the circles of Christian faith: "ineffable and invisible to the many... alone revealed to the true lovers of holiness"¹⁰². The accent on love points us toward another aspect of this science: like the divine *ἔργον* – indeed, part and parcel of it – hierarchic science is something in which the creature is called to participate. We find Dionysius declaring that illumined souls "become participants [*μετόχους γενέσθαι*] of the perfecting science of the sacred things contemplated"¹⁰³, or, in reference to the first ranks of the angels, that "participation in the Thearchic science [i.e., the direct vision of Providence] is [for them] purification and illumination and perfection"¹⁰⁴. The hierarchic science is not so much something that, albeit divinely given or revealed, we are to apprehend through our own powers as it is, quite simply, a "gift"¹⁰⁵, a grace, and a perfecting power. It bespeaks, in short, the

Thus even does the all-wise science of the sacred things first hatch them [the initiates of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy] through the introductory nourishment of the shaping and life-creating Scriptures, bringing them to perfection through their state of divine generation [i.e., Baptism] and, in due order, granting them in saving manner communion with that which is in the form of light and accomplishes perfection¹⁰⁶.

activity of the divine Pedagogue who is also the content of His own instructions:

98. See *EH* V.3.7 513C (113:21-23) for the Scripture and, for the cult, see our discussion below, 158-163, and Chapter IV, 177-208 and 219-229.

99. *EH* III.3.12 441C (92:6-7). See P. Rorem's remarks on theurgy in Symbols, 13-14.

100. Recall *DN* I.4 592C (114:9-10) and the *θεωρία* of the blessed who look upon *τῆς μὲν ὁρατῆς αὐτοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] θεοφανείας ἐν πανάγνοις θεωρίαις ἀποπληρούμενοι*.

101. See, for example, *CH* VII.2 208C (29:8-10); *EH* I.3 373C (66:6-7); *DN* II.8 645C (132:6-13); III.1 680B (138:1-6); and *MT* I.1 997A (141:1-3). See also Roques, *L'Univers*, 124-125.

102. *Ep.* IX.1 1105C (197:2-4).

103. *CH* III.2 165D (19:13-14).

104. *CH* VII.3 209C (30:23-24).

105. See Gandillac, 116, note 1.

106. "... οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ἡ πάνσοφος ἐπιστήμη πρῶτα μὲν αὐτοὺς τῇ τῶν μορφωτικῶν καὶ ζωοποιῶν λογίων εἰσαγωγικῇ τροφῇ μαιεῖται, τελεσφορήσασα δὲ τὴν πρὸς θεογενεσίαν αὐτῶν ὑπόστασιν, ἐνδίδωσι σωτηρίως αὐτοῖς ἐν τάξει τὴν πρὸς τὰ φαιτοειδῆ καὶ τελεσιουργὰ κοινωνίαν. *EH* III.3.6 433AB (85.17-21). See also, again, *CH* VII.3 209CD (30:18-20) on the Thearchy acting to perfect through its "light" and "science".

The theme of light pervades the CD. It is also, as expressed in the term “illumination [ἐλλάμψις]” in its larger sense¹⁰⁷ – together with others such as φωτοδοσία and the like – one that is inevitably connected with the notion of hierarchic science¹⁰⁸. Our initiation into this science introduces us into the knowledge of God himself in his δυνάμεις. In view of our conclusions concerning hierarchic τάξις, it would appear to us that ιεραρχική ἐπιστήμη is in fact Dionysius’ chosen way of expressing the Pauline logion: “but we have the mind of Christ” (I Cor 2:16). If the τάξις of hierarchy points to the single organism of the redeemed creation that is the body of Christ, then its ἐπιστήμη indicates the intelligence of that same body, the mind of Wisdom incarnate¹⁰⁹. To participate in this science is to see and to know the creation as God knows it, and it is thus one of the essential features of that process that Dionysius calls deification¹¹⁰. Such is the case, for example, in the priestly orders of “our hierarchy”, who in themselves

... display the ordered illuminations in first and middle and final sacred activities and orders, themselves arranged in hierarchic differentiations, showing forth... in themselves the ordered and unconfused nature of the divine energies¹¹¹.

107. The narrower sense being the middle term of the triadic activity of hierarchy: purification-illumination-perfection. See Roques, “Introduction”, CH, xlii, note 2, where he observes that, more broadly, ἐλλάμψις stands for “l’ensemble de la manifestation divine des dons divins”, i.e., as the equivalent of πρόοδος or ἔκφανσις.

108. For a fairly direct connection of light with ἐπιστήμη, see: CH III.2 165B (18:12-14); VII.3 209C (30:21-24); XIII.3 204A (46:13-14); EH V.3.8 516B (114:22-23); VI.1.2 532C (116:2-6) and 3.6 537B (119:24-25). For light and γνῶσις, see: CH VII.2 208C (29:12-13); EH I.2 372B (64:11-14); V.1.3 504C (106:19-20); DN I.4 592D (115:6-11); IV.6 701B (150:9-14); Ep. I 1065A (156-157); and IX.1 1108A (198:7-8).

109. And not, as von Ivanka would have it, a baseless circle without any substance, Plat. Christ., 275-276.

110. See Roques’ remarks, “Introduction”, CH, xxxix-xi. We also recall that θέωσις does not cease with illumination, i.e., sharing in God’s knowledge of creation. There is always the further movement, via self-transcendence and the gift of grace, into the “ray of the divine darkness” (MT I.1 1000A [142:10]), the passage into the γνῶσις which is the “science of him who is beyond being” (DN I.1 588A [108:8-10]). This is not contrary to the principle of hierarchy as we understand it. Instead, it is first of all inherent in the promise of Christ whose Transfiguration is promised us (DN I.4 592BC [114:9-11]) because he “took what was ours and exalted it far above us” (DN II.10 649A [135:8-9]). Secondly, as we intend to show below in Chapter IV, our hierarchy is at once the “place” of union and itself the icon of the soul in union with God (see esp. our conclusions to Chapter IV, 219-222). Thirdly, we shall also note the parallels between this understanding of our sanctified world and the systems of Origen and Evagrius (see Chapters VI and VIII below, 276-278 and 326-340 respectively).

111. “... δεικνῦσαι τὰς τεταγμένας ἐλλάμψεις, εἰς τὰς πρώτας καὶ μέσας καὶ τελευταίας ἱεράς ἐνεργείας καὶ τάξεις, ἐν διακρίσειν ἱεραρχικαῖς... ἐμφαίνουσαι... ἐν ἑαυταῖς τῶν θεῶν ἐνεργειῶν τὸ τεταγμένον καὶ ἀσύμφορτον”. EH V.1.7 508D (109:23-26).

They indeed “perfect those who have already communed in the divine light by means of the perfecting science of those illuminations which they have contemplated”¹¹².

c) The apportionment of knowledge: a difficulty

The share of each in the science of Providence is varied. Each participates in accordance with his ἀναλογία. There is, as it were, illumination and illumination, depths and, then, depths: “the superior orders have the illuminations and powers of the lower orders, but the latter do not participate in those of the former”¹¹³. Clearly, the hierarchic principle here gives rise to problems which, it must be admitted, Dionysius never adequately answers. That the higher orders should have all the knowledge and “powers” of the lower – and more – sounds dangerously like the causal σειρά of a Proclus¹¹⁴. The Areopagite’s ranks do not, of course, transmit being to those below, but still what appears to be his identification of advancement into God as coterminus with priestly rank must, from a Christian perspective, be reckoned one of the gravest defects of his system. In his defense we must add that the appearance here is not quite equivalent to the substance¹¹⁵. The Areopagite’s supremely idealistic – to say the least – portrait of the Christian clergy¹¹⁶ is in very great part a function of his vision of the hierarchy as an icon, a sacrament. He is not, however, always clear that the icon, as well as announcing a presence, is also the anticipation of a future fulfillment.

d) Knowledge as cooperation and ascent

Capacities differ, but some share in the deifying science remains open to all:

... as many of the intelligent and reasonable beings as turn so far as they are wholly able towards unity with it [the Thearchy], and stretch unceasingly forth so far as possible for them toward its divine illuminations are – if it be lawful so to speak – by means of the imitation of God possible to them made worthy even of the name of God¹¹⁷.

Open to all, that is, of those who strive after it. We arrive once again at the requirement of our cooperation with grace. If the mark of created being is

112. *EHV*.1.3 504B (106:11-12).

113. *CHV* 196B (25:9-11).

114. See, for example, *Elements*, Propositions 93 and 147 (Dodds) 85 and 129.

115. See our discussion in Chapter IV below, 208-214.

116. But not entirely as Meyendorff would have it, his clericalism; see “Notes sur l’influence dionysienne en Orient” *SP* 2 (1957) 547-552. For a more charitable view, see Armstrong, “Negative Theology”, 183, and our discussion referred to in the note preceding.

117. “... ὅσα τῶν νοερῶν τε καὶ λογικῶν πρὸς τὴν ἑνωσιν ὅση δύναμις ὀλιγῶς ἐπέστραπται καὶ πρὸς τὰς θείας αὐτῆς ἐλλάμψεις, ὡς ἐφικτόν, ἀκαταλήκτως ἀνατείνεται, τῇ κατὰ δύναμιν, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, θεομιμησία καὶ τῆς θεϊκῆς ὁμωνυμίας ἡξίωται”. *CH* XII.3 293B (43:16-19). Note the presence again of the infinite ascent.

continual movement, the expression of this principle with regard to hierarchic science is continual ascent, the unceasing and deliberate assent to the activity of the divine illuminations¹¹⁸. This willed submission to increasing knowledge of the real and the action of enlightening grace is the root sense of the Dionysian ἀναγωγή¹¹⁹. If hierarchy provides – rather, constitutes – the only true knowledge of the created universe and thus the knowledge of Providence itself, such a science must be an ever-continuing process. Hierarchic science is therefore an ascent into the apprehension of divine Providence, of the mysteries of grace, of divine illumination and transmission, that lie at the core of both the sensible and intelligible worlds: for “this is the all-holy θεσμός of the Thearchy, that the seconds be led up [ἀνάγεσθαι] through the firsts toward its most divine radiance [φέγγος]”¹²⁰. The ascent is ordered and, in accordance with a varied creation (and in partial explanation of the difficulties noted above), some are given charge over others:

... that the ascent and conversion toward communion and union with God might be in order; and that the procession from God might be granted commonly and beneficently to all the hierarchies in most sacred good order¹²¹.

In ἀναγωγή and πρόοδος, creaturely ascent and divine condescension, we again find the cycle of divine love. In this cycle the creature is called to share, and to do so by apprehending through its contemplation the τάξις that is the revealed expression of God’s Wisdom, the icon of divine Justice, and reality of his Salvation. The act of participation and apprehension, of assent and ascent, is also an activity, νύ, that effects the creature’s conformity to God’s likeness.

3. The sacred ἐνέργεια: hierarchy as the process of conformity to Providence

a) Hierarchy = θέωσις; a share in God’s energies

In the first chapter of the EH Dionysius states that

The Thearchic beatitude, divinity by nature, principle of deification... bestowed the hierarchy for the salvation and deification of all reasoning [humans] and intuiting [angels] beings¹²².

118. Roques, *L’Univers*, 208.

119. Recall the predominantly passive voice of ἀνάγω as noted above in Chapter II, 89, note 89. Thus also my objection to Rorem’s consistent rendering of ἀναγωγή as “uplifting” in the Paulist Press translation (see his remarks in *Symbols*, 99-116). He is quite right to stress the passive voice, but the notes of cooperation and of assent are not adequately covered.

120. *EH* V.1.4 504C (106:24-25).

121. “... ἐν ἣ κατὰ τάξιν ἡ πρὸς Θεὸν ἀναγωγή καὶ ἐπιστροφή καὶ κοινωνία καὶ ἑνωσις καὶ μὴν καὶ ἡ παρὰ Θεοῦ πάσαις ταῖς ἱεραρχίαις ἀγαθοπρεπῶς ἐνδιδομένη καὶ κοινωνικῶς ἐπιφοιτῶσα μετ’ εὐκοσμίας ἱερωτάτης πρόοδος”. *CH* IX.2 260B (37:10-13).

122. “... Ἡ θεαρχικὴ μακαριότης, ἡ φύσει θεότης, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς θεώσεως... τὴν ἱεραρχίαν ἐπὶ σωτηρία καὶ θεώσει πάντων τῶν λογικῶν τε καὶ νοερῶν οὐσιῶν ἐδωρήσατο...”. *EH* I.4. 376B (66:20-67:1).

His definition of deification follows directly: “deification is, so far as is allowed, the assimilation to, and union with, God”¹²³. Concerning this term it is significant first to note that for our author *Θεσις* is descriptive not of a state of being but rather of an active power. It is “by means of the deification [coming] from himself [*τῇ ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ Θεώσει*]” that God transforms his creatures, according to their capacity, into “many gods”¹²⁴. Deification is thus, once again, God’s gift of participation in his own energies, such that each (in this text, each order of the hierarchies) is brought up according to measure to “divine cooperation, accomplishing those things by grace and God-given power, being united to the Thearchy both naturally and supernaturally”¹²⁵.

The near juxtaposition of hierarchy and deification is, secondly, not accidental. They are one and the same when understood as an activity of God in which the creature shares. Hierarchy, too, “is... assimilated [*ἀφομοιουμένη*], so far as possible, to the divine likeness” and “led up in due degree to the illuminations given it from God for the imitation of God”¹²⁶. Both “natural” as the intended realization of the creature’s capacity for God, and “supernatural” as wholly dependent upon the grace or *δύναμις* of Providence whose icon it is – “plainly showing forth the divine energies”¹²⁷ – hierarchy is the sacred milieu established by God where divine condescension and creaturely striving, the energies of created and Creator, meet to become “one, new, theandric energy”¹²⁸ through and in the unique “philanthropy of Christ:

... according to which we learn to war no more with ourselves, nor with each other, nor with angels, but rather cooperate in divine things [literally ‘co-work,’]... according to the Providence of Jesus¹²⁹.

We discover ourselves, thirdly, yet again confronting the mystery of divine love. The latter finds its center and accomplishment in the person of Jesus, and it works through that series of “compressions” described by Hierotheos¹³⁰ to concentrate and gather all up and into itself. Hierarchy represents – indeed, is – the presence within creation of this “motor” of Providence, and the *ἐνέργεια* of hierarchy is precisely this sanctification and gathering of creaturely motion up and into the likeness and unity of its source. This activity embraces every holy motion of created intelligence, from the first, feeble turning away from error on the part

123. “... ἡ δὲ Θεωσις ἐστὶν ἡ πρὸς Θεὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοιώσις τε καὶ ἔνωσις”. *EH* 1.3 376 (66:12-13).

124. *DN* II.2 649C (136:13-14).

125. *CH* III.3 168A (19:22-20:1).

126. *CH* III.1 164D (17:4-5).

127. *EH* V.1.7 509A (110:3-5).

128. *Ep.* IV 1072C (161:9-10).

129. “... τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν εἰρηνοχύτου φιλανθρωπίας, καθ’ ἣν οὐ μὴ μάθωμεν ἐτι πολεμεῖν, οὔτε ἑαυτοῖς οὔτε ἀλλήλοις οὔτε ἀγγέλοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοῖς τὰ θεῖα κατὰ δύναμιν συνεργήσωμεν κατὰ πρόνοιαν Ἰησοῦ...”. *DN* XI.5 953A (221:6-8).

130. *DN* IV.15-17 715A-D (161:1-162:5).

of sinful humanity to the beatitude of the angels in God's immediate presence. According to Stiglmayr, Dionysius' "whole universe, with all its orders of beings, arranges itself before his eyes into a single channeling ladder"¹³¹.

In a hierarchy, fourthly, creaturely motion or activity becomes the revelation of Providence, of the divine love that moves the superior to care for those below, the latter to those above, and harmony throughout¹³². Dionysius will therefore speak of the angels as moved by God¹³³, of the motion granted to the Seraphim for the accomplishment of their task, and of the angels as moved from within by God to contemplation. Similarly, it is not of himself (αὐτοκινήτως) that the bishop accomplishes sacerdotal consecrations, but as moved by God in the likeness, indeed, of the High Priest's (Jesus') submission to the Father¹³⁴. In the rites conducted for the dead, the bishop speaks as one moved by the "Spirit who is the principle of every sacrament"¹³⁵. Through participation in the hierarchic activity – and so in deification – the creature finds itself in process of arrival at its proper goal "to do that which is its own to do"¹³⁶, and in so doing to show forth in itself the single activity of Providence.

b) Θεομίμησις

This is the sense of the θεομίμησις toward which a hierarchy is ever in process of being conducted. The imitation of God is synonymous with perfection (τελείωσις)¹³⁷, and the purpose or goal (σκοπός) of hierarchy is: "to be unfalteringly dependent upon the deformity imitative of God"¹³⁸. It is nothing more nor less than the ministry of love. From the Seraphim to whom is given pre-eminently the θεομίμητον¹³⁹ as "made worthy to become ministers [πρωτοῦργοι] of the theomimetic power and activity"¹⁴⁰ down through the ranks of angels, "each of whose... names reveals the divinely imitative characteristics of their likeness to God"¹⁴¹, to the bishop of the Church who acts in imitation of God through illumining the proselyte with Baptism¹⁴², to the ordinand receiving the seal of the Cross signifying "the life in imitation of God in Jesus Christ"¹⁴³, to the reading of the

131. Stiglmayr, "Die Lehre von den Sakramenten" ZKT XII (1898) 253-254.

132. DN IV.15 713B (161:3-5).

133. CH X.2 273A (40:12-13).

134. EH VII.3-7 564 CD (129:3-10).

135. τελεταρχικῶ πνεύματι, *Ibid.* 564B (128:18).

136. δοῦν τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, DN X.4 952C (220:17).

137. CH III.2 165B (18:14-15): ἡ τελείωσις τὸ κατ' οἰκείαν ἐπὶ τὸ θεομίμητον ἀναχθῆναι...

138. CH VII.2 208A (28:14-15). For the use of σκοπός in the Neoplatonists, see Koch, *Beziehungen*, 33-34 and esp. Larsen, *Jamblicus*, 435-449 and 451-454.

139. CH VII.2 208C (29:13).

140. CH XIII.3 301C and 304A (45:20-21 and 46:9-11).

141. CH VIII.1 237C (32:16-17).

142. EH II.3.3 400B (75:6).

143. EH V.3.4 512A (111:23-24).

psalms that teach the θεομίμητον ἀκίνητον with regard to sin¹⁴⁴, and the Gospels' theomimetic πολιτεία¹⁴⁵, to the proselyte himself advancing through Baptism to the θεομίμησις that puts an end to the powers opposed to deification¹⁴⁶, all participation in hierarchical activity is participation in the single Providence, or love, of God:

... from which, as from a uniting force, we are united and, our scattered differences concentrated in a manner not of this world, are brought together into a God-like unit and a unity imitative of the divine¹⁴⁷.

Participating in the ministry of love, angels and humans find their deification. Dionysius' sanctified creature is not a solitary.

The degrees of divinization vary. Stiglmayr spoke of the Dionysian universe as a channeling ladder, we ourself of Hierotheos' "compressions", and the text above of "concentration" – συμπτύσσω – literally, to fold together. The latter verb and, especially, συνάγω are often employed to describe the divine activity and its reflection in the hierarchies¹⁴⁸. As one moves up the hierarchic ascents there is a gathering or pulling together of faculties and powers, a progressive concentration of activity in God, a kind of acceleration into unity with him, i.e., toward the ἔνωσις which is the τέλος or purpose of created existence. At the same time, we find that this concentration, together with what Stiglmayr describes as the "peeling away [Lorschälung]" of everything that is opposed to union¹⁴⁹, does not require the higher ranks to pull away from the lower in the interest of a more perfect contemplation of God. That the contrary is the case is implicit in the θεομίμητον with which the hierarchy seeks conformity. Recalling Chapter II and our astral metaphor concerning Dionysius' transformation of the μονή - πρόοδος - ἐπιστροφή cycle, we find the same principle illustrated here: the higher one

144. *EH* IV.3.4 477A (98:6).

145. *EH* III.3.4 429C (83:21).

146. *EH* II.3.6 404A (77:21-22), and II.3.7 404B (78:9-10).

147. "... ἐξ ἧς ὡς ἐνοποιουῦ δυνάμεως ἐνιζόμεθα καὶ τῶν μεριστῶν ἡμῶν ἑτεροτήτων ὑπερκοσμίως συμπτυσσομένων εἰς θεοειδῆ μονάδα συναγόμεθα καὶ θεομίμητον ἔνωσιν...". *DN* I.4 589D (112:12-14).

148. For συνάγω, see *EH* III.1 424C (79:10-12) where it is the Eucharist which "gathers together" our several lives into a uniform (ἐνοειδής) deification. Similarly, we find the gathering power of the "kiss of peace" (II.3.8 429A [83:2-3]), of the "philosophy" of monasticism (VI.3.2 533D [118:3]), of the powers of the soul (*DN* IV.9 705A [153:13]), of the "firsts" of the hierarchies (*DN* XII.4 972B [226:4-5]), of the angelic powers (*DN* VII.3 868B [195:3-5]), and finally of the divine ἐνέργεια itself (*DN* I.4 589D [112:14]; IV.4 700B [148:19-20]; IV.6 701B [150:7-10]; IV.7 701D [151:10]; XI.2 949D [219:8-13]; and XIII.3 980B [228:10]). And see "Macarius" on the very similar use of συνάγω in Chapter IX below, 380, and note 224. For συμπτύσσω, or σύμπτυξις, and the sacred activity of the rites accomplishing this, see *EH* I.1 372B (64:4-5) and III.1 424C (79:11); for our "guides" I.5 376D (67:16-21); and for the monks, VI.1.3 533A (116:18). See also *DN* I.4 589D (112:13-14) and, again in reference to ἔρω, IV.16 713C (161:12).

149. Stiglmayr, "Über die Termini", 183.

ascends the scale of a hierarchy, the greater one finds this concentration, the more intense the radiance of divine illumination, and consequently the more completely realized is the state of perfection, i.e., the θεομίμησις or participation in Providence. Hierarchy, the ladder of contemplation and love given us for the exclusive and purified contemplation of that which is Real, can scarcely do other than engender love. The higher one ascends this ladder, the more intense and greater the scope and field of activity for love's exercise.

c) Purification - illumination - perfection

The exercise of love in contemplation and providence underlies Dionysius' threefold division of hierarchic activity: "the order of hierarchy is that some are purified and others purify, that some are illumined and others illumine, and that some are perfected and others make perfect"¹⁵⁰. The process is given more detail in the *EH*:

The first power of those who are being perfected is [the power of] being purified; in the middle and after purification [the power of] being illumined and of contemplating sacred things; finally, and more divine than the others is [the power of] the sacred illuminations, whence is engendered a contemplation illumining as to the perfect science¹⁵¹.

Let us note first of all that the passive voice is not limited solely to the ladder's lower rungs, but is proper to all. The "perfect science" also recalls the fact that for Dionysius the notions of energy, (or motion), and knowledge are inseparable¹⁵². Hierarchic energy is a business of γνῶσις, leading to, realizing itself in, and proceeding from the "science" that perfects the creature in the image of God. The triple functions of purification, illumination, and perfection correspond, after a certain fashion, to the threefold division of human κίνησις or γνῶσις given in the *DN*¹⁵³. The soul is purified in proceeding from the outward appearance to the inward, intelligible significance of material things or symbols, progressively illumined in circling discursively around this intelligible core, and finally perfected through being gathered into the interior circle of unity. In addition, this correspondence between micro- and macrocosm applies to both human beings and angels:

... in its own fashion each heavenly and human mind has its own first and

150. *CH* III.2 165BC (18:17-19:2). For the sources of this triad in the Neoplatonists, see Koch, *Beziehungen*, 174-177, and in the Cappadocians, both Sheldon-Williams, *CambHist*, 445, 451-452 and 454-456, and Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 172-173.

151. "Ἡ δὲ τῶν τελουμένων δύναμις ἡ πρώτη μὲν ἐστὶν ἡ καθαιρομένη, μέση δὲ μετὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ἡ φωτιζομένη καὶ τινων ἱερῶν θεωρητικὴ, τελευταία δὲ καὶ θειοτέρα τῶν ἄλλων ἡ τῶν ἱερῶν φωτισμῶν, ὧν ἐγεγόνει θεωρός, ἐλλαμπρομένη τὴν τελειωτικὴν ἐπιστήμην". *EH* V.1.3 504B (106:12-16).

152. As they are for both Plotinus (see for example *Enn.* III.6.5 and III.8.6, and Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 85) and Evagrius (See Chapter VIII below, 329-340).

153. *DN* IV.9 705AB (153:10-154:6).

middle and final orders and powers relation to the ascents of which we have spoken, which are manifestations – in proportion and after the manner of each – of the hierarchic illuminations according to which each [mind], in accordance with what is lawful and possible for it, comes into participation of the purification which is beyond because of the super-abundant light, of the perfection which is prior to all perfection¹⁵⁴.

The references to μετουσία and to God should also recall a third triad, that of ἀφαίρεσις - ἀγνώσια - ἔνωσις, which we discussed above in connection with ἔνωσις, and which we saw as at once the necessary complement and simultaneous accompaniment of all sanctified activity.

From first to last throughout the ranks of the hierarchies we find the threefold process. The Seraphim know purification as continual liberation (dare we say ἀφαίρεσις) from ignorance, perpetual growth in illumination¹⁵⁵, and ceaseless motion into the “perfecting science” of God. The lowest orders of the Church’s penitents and catechumens knew purification as a turning away from sin and delusion¹⁵⁶, and looked forward to baptism’s illumination and the Eucharist’s union. At all levels the passive voice marks the process as a participation in God’s own activity¹⁵⁷.

The process is not exclusively passive, however. Each mind in the order of the hierarchies, save the very last of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, must express itself, in accordance with the θεομίμητον, through the active powers of purifying, illumining, and perfecting. Once more we arrive at Dionysius’ Christian “baptism” of the Neoplatonist principle of ἐπιστροφή as productive of πρόοδος. The providential love exercised by the created intelligence is the necessary expression of its contemplation of and union with the Beloved¹⁵⁸. To know and to love God is to become like he is, and so, in the act of returning to him, the activity of the creature “spills over”, as it were, in love for its fellows. The higher the order, the greater must be the extent of the “spill”. It is in light of this principle that Dionysius attempts to explain how, in Isa 6, a Seraph is said to have purified the prophet (a technical impossibility in view of hierarchic law):

For as God purifies all through [his] being cause of all purification, and, to use an example close to hand, the hierarch of our hierarchy through the

154. “... καθ’ ἑαυτὸν ἕκαστος οὐράνιος τε καὶ ἀνθρώπινος νοῦς ἰδικὰς καὶ πρώτας καὶ μέσας καὶ τελευταίας τάξεις τε καὶ δυνάμεις πρὸς τὰς εἰρημένας τῶν καθ’ ἕκαστον ἱεραρχικῶν ἐλλάμψεων οἰκείας ἀναγωγὰς ἀναλόγως ἐκφαινομένας, καθ’ ἃς ἕκαστος ἐν μετουσίᾳ γίνεται κατὰ τὸ αὐτῷ θεμιτὸν τε καὶ ἐφικτὸν τῆς ὑπεραγνοτάτης καθάρσεως, τοῦ υπερπλήρους φωτός, τῆς προτελείου τελειώσεως. CH X.3 273C (41:1-6).

155. CH VII.3 209CD (30:17-31:5).

156. See EH II.3.1 397B (73:17-18) and III.3.7 436B (87:17-20). So vs. Rorem and the idea that Dionysius’ purification is purely intellectual; see *Anmerkung*, 59.

157. This is the view of Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 178-179, in opposition particularly to Koch, *Beziehungen*, 175-176.

158. Roques has expressed this well in *L’Univers*, 100.

purifying and illumining of his ministers [deacons] and priests is himself said to purify and illumine – the orders consecrated by him referring to him their proper sacred activities – then the angel effecting the purification of the prophet [Isaiah] refers his proper purifying science and power to God first, as cause, and then to the Seraphim as first ministers and hierarchs... [as the angel says to Isaiah], “the order of the first beings is hierarch and ruler after God, from which I was initiated in deiform manner into purifying. This, then, is that which purifies thee through me, the same through which the cause and creator brought forth his proper providential energies from the place secret even to us¹⁵⁹.”

The same principle is at work in the sacerdotal division of power in our hierarchy¹⁶⁰. Each order up has the virtue(s) of the one below in addition to its own. There is a certain discrepancy in that, whereas in the angelic hierarchy each accomplishes the full range of operations for the one below, the distribution and order is less tidy in our own. We submit that this is not only due to Dionysius’ being “hampered” by the actual existence of a Church order in building his system – the opinion put forward by Roques¹⁶¹ – but instead, and rather more, to the Christian attendance upon the eschaton. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy must exist in a more fluid state inasmuch as its constituents (save the sacraments or at least that which they represent) are themselves fluid, mortal, and neither is the λόγος for any one of them readily apparent at any given moment. The hierarchy of human souls awaits its definitive form in the general resurrection¹⁶². The description of its shape in the present age however, together with the eternal verities of the angelic hierarchy, bring us to this chapter’s second half.

B. THE HIERARCHIES

1. The Celestial Hierarchy

a) The Dionysian κόσμος νοητός

The angels’ hierarchy represents the Dionysian κόσμος νοητός. The angels are pure intelligences, bodiless [ἄσώματος] and immaterial (ἄυλοι), the two

159. “Ὡς γὰρ ὁ Θεὸς καθαίρει πάντας τῷ πάσης καθάρσεως εἶναι αἰτίαν μᾶλλον δὲ (παραπλησίῳ γὰρ χρήσομαι παραδείγματι) καθάπερ ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἱεράρχης διὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ λειτουργῶν ἢ ἱερέων καθαίρων ἢ φωτίζων, αὐτὸς λέγεται καθαίρειν καὶ φωτίζειν τῶν δι’ αὐτοῦ καθιερωμένων τάξεων ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἀνατιθεισῶν τὰς οἰκείας ἱεράς ἐνεργείας, οὕτω καὶ τὴν οἰκείαν καθαριστικὴν ἐπιστήμην καὶ δύναμιν ὁ τὴν κάθαρσιν τοῦ θεολόγου τελειουργῶν ἄγγελος, ἐπὶ Θεὸν μὲν ὡς αἴτιον, ἐπὶ δὲ τὸν Σεραφίμ ὡς πρωτουργὸν ἱεράρχην, ἀνατίθῃσιν... ἱεράρχης δὲ μετὰ Θεὸν ἡγεμῶν, ὁ τῶν πρωτίστων οὐσιῶν διάκοσμος, παρ’ οὗ τὸ καθαίρειν ἐγὼ θεοειδῶς ἐμνήθην. Οὗτος οὖν ἐστὶν ὁ δι’ ἐμοῦ σε καθαίρων, δι’ οὗ τὰς οἰκείας προνοητικὰς ἐνεργείας ἐκ τοῦ κρυφίου καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς προήγαγεν ἡ πάσης αἰτία καὶ δημιουργὸς καθάρσεως. CH XIII.4 305C-308A (48:20-49:12).

160. See EH V.1.6-7 508BC (109:3-21) and V.3.8 516BC (114:13-24).

161. *L’Univers*, 198-199.

162. See below, Chapter IV, 218-219.

adjectives being, in his eyes, necessary complements to an intelligible nature¹⁶³. Their hierarchy also conforms to the triadic scheme of intelligible/intelligent (νοητός/νοερός) noted above¹⁶⁴. There are nine ranks of angels in the CH¹⁶⁵, a traditional number bearing the equally traditional names¹⁶⁶ of Seraphim, Cherubim, thrones, dominions, powers, authorities, principalities, archangels, and angels. They are arranged, however, in accordance with a triadic plan that clearly recalls Proclus¹⁶⁷.

Roques holds that the Areopagite's intelligible world, with its three triads of orders, is almost exactly that of Proclus¹⁶⁸. Dodds sees the latter's divine ἐνάδες simply taken over en bloc by our author¹⁶⁹, while Brons understands Dionysius as having muddled the Neoplatonist doctrine of the νοητά¹⁷⁰. While the impress of Procline thought is undeniable¹⁷¹, the essential would appear to be Dionysius' fundamentally Christian-inspired use of the Neoplatonic categories and language. He has used them to express, even in a fairly traditional way, long-standing Christian speculation about the angelic world¹⁷².

We note first of all that it is to Jesus that Dionysius accords the title "super-essential cause of the heavenly beings", and his assertion a line below that, in becoming incarnate Jesus did not "overthrow the good order [εὐταξία]", i.e., the hierarchical arrangement of creation, "that had been ordered and chosen by God himself"¹⁷³. Jesus is both the sense (ἐπίνοια) of all hierarchies and its beneficent cause, the single, personal reality of the angels' hierarchy fully as much as he is of our own. A second, basic assertion follows: the angelic powers are each, and all equally, creatures. Dionysius is careful to note this at the beginning of the same chapter that deals with Christ as cause. The Thearchy "established all the essences

163. See Roques, *L'Univers*, 55.

164. For more on the νοητός/νοερός distinction or the confusion between the two, see the discussion following des Places' article, "La Religion de Jamblique" *Entretiens Hardt* Vol. XXI, esp. 95.

165. See CH VII.1 205B - IX.2 260B (27:4-37:16) for the listing of the different ranks and their attributes.

166. See esp. Roques, "Introduction", CH, lvii-lxiii, for the biblical and patristic antecedents of Dionysius' nine orders and their names.

167. See Roques, *Ibid.* lxivff, and *L'Univers*, 135ff. For Proclus, see In Parm., col. 1246-1255.

168. *Ibid.* lxvii; but see also *L'Univers*, 78, where Roques notes that Dionysius' angels have no demiurgic functions.

169. *Elements*, 260 note 3.

170. *Gott u.S.*, esp. 32-33 and 44-45.

171. There are, however, some scholars who do take exception to the specific influence of Proclus; see Sheldon-Williams, "Henads and Angels" *SP* XI 65-71, and the same scholar on the influence of Gregory of Nazianzus, *CambHist*, 442-443. See Chapter VII below, 306, note 185.

172. See, for example, Völker, *Kontemplation*, 120-140, and Daniélou, *Les anges et leur mission* (Chevetogne: 1951) 13, 16, 45-46 and 118.

173. CH IV.4 181C (23:12-13).

of beings... [and] brought them into existence". The same transcendent Creator calls every creature, from the lifeless stones to the immaterial intelligences, into communion [κοινωνία] with itself¹⁷⁴. There is no source of being, life, or intelligence other than the unique providence of God in Trinity¹⁷⁵.

What happens, then, to the world of Proclus? That philosopher's vision of the intelligible order, a vision which E. R. Dodds has characterized as "almost the *reductio ad absurdum* of rationalism... a doctrine of [Aristotelian] categories... transformed into an objectively conceived hierarchy of entities or forces"¹⁷⁶, is radically altered. Dionysius has eliminated that which tied the whole system together, provided indeed its *raison d'être*: the attempt to portray the sensible and spiritual worlds as a sort of unbroken chain of causes, each level ontologically dependent upon the level or complex of levels immediately above and ontologically prior. Insisting on the God of Christian tradition, and particularly on Jesus as the unique and immediate cause and agent of creation, Dionysius has effectively broken the back of Proclus' *σειραί* or hierarchies¹⁷⁷. The beings of the *CH* do not have even any of that association with the maintenance of the physical universe for which there were precedents in Christian tradition¹⁷⁸. To say, therefore, that the *CD* represents the attempt, however covert, to present the essentials of late Neoplatonist cosmology amounts in effect to an act of eisegesis for which there is simply no support in the text¹⁷⁹.

b) A perfected creation: our models for the life in God

We are left with Brons' accusation of "dialectical weariness". The question is serious. If Dionysius' *κόσμος νοητός* is not an hypostatized sequence of generative causes, then we must wonder just what the complex language of hierarchies and triads does signify. While there is a certain quality of the "decorative" to some of Dionysius' writing here, his angelic world cannot be reduced, as does von Ivanka¹⁸⁰, to the purely ornamental. The angels have a real function:

... an angel is an *εἰκὼν* of God, a manifestation of the unseen light, a pure mirror, most transparent, blameless, undefiled, unsullied, receiving into itself (if it is lawful so to speak) the beauty of the deiform which is the

174. *CH* IV.1 177C (20:10-11). See also *DN* IV.1 693B (144:3-5); VII.2 869A (196:13-16); and *Ep.* VIII.1 1085D (173:14-174:3).

175. A view echoed by Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 173.

176. *Elements*, xxv.

177. See the argument, too, of von Ivanka, *Plat Christ*, 255-261.

178. See Daniélou, *Les anges*, 11ff and 37ff.

179. The eisegesis may vary, for example, from Hathaway's declaration that one is obliged to read into the *CD* the doctrine of intermediate generation, compelled to do so indeed by the very logic of the system (*Hierarchy*, xv-xvi), to Koutras' bland assertion, offered without any evidence, that each level of the angels' hierarchy is ontologically dependent on the one above ("Ἐννοια", 249).

180. *Plat. Christ.*, 255-261.

impress of the Good, and, after a manner of speaking reflecting within itself the goodness of the silence in the sanctuary¹⁸¹.

Roques, citing Koch¹⁸², writes: "Le monde des essences intelligible a pour fonction de faire sortir Dieu de son silence... par excellence il est l'ordre révélateur"¹⁸³. If God, as our author never tires of stressing, is truly hidden and unknowable, yet also made known in his operations in creation, then it is the function of the created intelligible world, the unique function of the angels, "to reveal in themselves the secret goodness and to be messengers [angels] and declarers of the divine silence... manifest lights and interpreters of him who is in the sanctuary"¹⁸⁴. The angels are messengers, manifestations, declarers, icons, and revelators of the uncreated¹⁸⁵ by nature and in very fulfillment of their being. Fashioned to enjoy prior to the rest of creation direct illumination as to the λόγοι both of all created beings¹⁸⁶ and of the divine operations (τῶν θεουργιῶν, i.e., the economy of Christ)¹⁸⁷, they are "pre-eminently and in varied fashion the revelators of the thearchic secrecy"¹⁸⁸. Indeed they are thus the very models of created intelligence as God wills it to become.

In Dionysius' working of the philosophers' hierarchies to fit the requirements of Christian revelation and tradition, the heavenly powers are not empowered to hand down being, life, or even the capacity for intelligence. They may only reveal to those already so enabled that which they have themselves received: the first ranks taking directly "from God who moves them and the rest in due degree [ἀναλόγως] from those who are moved by God"¹⁸⁹. All things are from God, every

181. "... εἰκὼν ἐστὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ ἄγγελος, φανέρωσις τοῦ ἀφανοῦς φωτός, ἔσοπτρον ἀκραιφνές, διειδέστατον, ἀλώβητον, ἄχραντον, ἀκηλίδωτον, εἰσδεχόμενον ὅλην, εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, τὴν ὡραιότητα τῆς ἀγαθοτύπου θεοειδείας καὶ ἀμιγῶς ἀναλάμπον ἐν ἑαυτῷ, καθάπερ οἶον τέ ἐστι, τὴν ἀγαθότητα τῆς ἐν ἀδύτοις σιγῆς. DN IV.22 724B (169:22-170:5). See Ephrem in Chapter IX, 370-371 below.

182. *Beziehungen*, 131.

183. *L'Univers*, 135.

184. "... ἐκφαίνειν ἐν ἑαυταῖς τὴν κρυφίαν ἀγαθότητα, καὶ εἶναι ἀγγέλους ὥσπερ ἑξαγγελτικῶς τῆς θείας σιγῆς καὶ οἶον φῶτα φανᾶ τοῦ ἐν ἀδύτοις ὄντος ἐρμηνευτικά". DN IV.2 696B (145:7-9).

185. For the terms ἐκφαίνειν, ἐκφαντορία, ἐκφαντορικός, and ἐκφανσις, and their frequency of appearance in the CD, see Indices, 55. For their particular connection with the angels as the expression of the divine, see: 1) ἐκφαίνειν: CH I.2 121A (7:13); II.2 137C (10:19); III.3 168A (20:2); VII.3 209D (30:9-10); EH IV.3.5 480C (99:17); DN IV.2 696B (145:7). 2) ἐκφαντορικός: CH IV.2 180A (21:11); V 196C (25:13-14); VII.1 205B (27:13); VIII.1 237C (32:18); IX.2 260A (37:9); X.2 273A (40:12); XII.2 293A (43:11); EH IV.3.6-7 481A (100:7 and 13); IV.3.10 481C (101:12); 3) ἐκφαντορία: CH II.2 137C (10:22); IV.2 180B (21:14); IV.3 180C (22:4-5). 4) ἐκφανσις: CH II.5 144C (15:9); EH IV.3.6 481B (101:14-16).

186. DN IV.1 693C (144:11).

187. CH VII.2 209A (29:23-24). Note, however, that the angels were ignorant of God's Economy in Christ until they were "informed" by him.

188. CH IV.2 180B (21:11).

189. CH X.2 273A (40:13-14).

illumination from the “Father of lights” – as Dionysius takes care to quote at the beginning of the CH¹⁹⁰ – and the mediatory capacity of his intelligible world is limited strictly to intelligence, to news or informative declaration. In a sense, then, the mediatory function of the κόσμος νοητός is no longer a matter of ontology but of grace.

Returning to the angels as models, let us recall our discussion of the hierarchic science and activity as the ever-increasing contemplation of, and participation in, the Providence or love of God. The angels are not models, in the sense of causative paradigms, but instead because they are in process of perfect fulfillment of the measure (ἀναλογία) given each for participation in grace:

... they before all other things have been deemed pre-eminently worthy of the title ‘angels,’ in that the thearchic illumination comes to pass first of all in them¹⁹¹.

They are the revelation of a perfect universe that, because it is perfect, is fixed in form in a way that our hierarchy, still in a world darkened by the Fall¹⁹², cannot yet be. In accordance with the will (λόγος) of God for each, theirs is also a varied world, and so a hierarchical one. Each has its own place in the single flow of being, life, and wisdom from the one cause, just as each has its own share in the unique movement of providential love working all in all, and drawing everything back to itself. In contemplating this particular κόσμος νοητός, we are not confronted with a ladder of causes or an ascending scale of being. Instead, we discover a vision of grace that reveals a progression of created perfections, an ascent of contemplations each in its own fashion complete, an ordered series of icons, a drawing up and together of increasingly perfect transparencies, a brilliance of serried mirrors reflecting the light of divinity down to us and leading us up “in harmony divine and in due measure [ἀναλογία] to the transcendent beginning and end of all good order”¹⁹³. Through dependence on its unique cause, Jesus, the Neoplatonist procession of causes becomes instead a single, perfected organism whose several members work to reveal its one source, mover, and τέλος. The angelic song, “holy, holy, holy”, as Dionysius tells us twice¹⁹⁴, echoes throughout the angels’ hierarchy and is its single message.

c) Our photagogues

The angels lead us up to God. As perfected participants in his Providence, they are set over the human world in the role of pedagogues, “illuminators, and

190. CH I.1 120B (7:3-4).

191. “... παρὰ πάντα τῆς ἀγγελικῆς ἐπωνυμίας ἐκκρίτως ἡξίωνται διὰ τὸ πρῶτως εἰς αὐτὰς ἐγγίνεσθαι τὴν θεαρχικὴν ἔλλαμψιν”. CH IV.2 180B (21:12-13).

192. See EH III.3.11 440C-441C (90:16-92:1) and our Chapter IV below, 177-181.

193. CH X.1 272D-273A (40:9-10).

194. CH VIII.2 240C (34:3-9) and X.2 273B (40:19-22).

guides toward sacred perfection”¹⁹⁵. This is the main burden of the *CH*, a meditation on Scriptures that seeks to show the angelic orders as “... rendered worthy of communion in Jesus... as truly drawing nigh to him by prior participation in the knowledge of his theurgic lights”¹⁹⁶. The angels “are rendered perfect... by the first and transcendent deification, in accordance with the highest science proper to them of the divine operations [τῶν θεουργιῶν]”¹⁹⁷. They are the first to know of the Incarnation¹⁹⁸, as initiated into the λόγοι of his theurgies¹⁹⁹. They are – and here Dionysius’ is more reminiscent of the angelology of Evagrius Ponticus²⁰⁰ – given charge over the λόγοι of our Providence and thus are involved in every activity pertaining to our salvation. The revelation of God (θεοφάνεια) given in Scripture is based on the vision (ὁράσεις) granted through the agency of the angels to the “theologians” i.e., the inspired writers²⁰¹. Christ himself, in his incarnate manifestation is subordinate to them²⁰². They are set in charge over the nations²⁰³, given authority to punish sinners²⁰⁴, purify and illumine the prophets²⁰⁵, announce Christ’s birth to Mary²⁰⁶, and to the shepherds around Bethlehem²⁰⁷, render Christ assistance at Gethsemane²⁰⁸, and act generally, throughout our history, as “thearchic channels of the grace whose source lies outside the circles of the created worlds and “beyond speech”²⁰⁹.

While one may note with Gandillac²¹⁰ a certain “préponderance de l’éternel sur l’historique” in, particularly, the final chapter of the *CH*, a concentration on the angels’ “rapport contemplatif à la lumière divine”, this is not necessarily a tendency in Dionysius’ angelology that accords ill with his general picture. We believe the latter to be the portrayal of the intelligible world as in essence an organic and multi-personal reflection of, and participation in, the love of the one universal cause and Providence:

195. *EH* V.2 501A (104:18-20).

196. *CH* VII.2 208C (29:9-13).

197. *Ibid.* (29:17-18).

198. *CH* IV.4 181B (22:23-24), and VII.3 209B (30:8-10).

199. *CH* VII.2 208D (29:23-24).

200. See Chapter VIII below, 327-328.

201. See esp. *CH* IV.3 180C (22:4-10).

202. *Ibid.* 181C (23:11-14).

203. *CH* XI.2 260B (37:14-15) and ff. Dionysius reveals himself as something of the philosopher here. He insists that Israel merited its special treatment rather than receiving it as a peculiar grace. See XI.3 260C (37:17-21), together with Gandillac’s notes, 133, notes 1 and 4, and 135 note 3, for commentary and comparison with a similar notion in Origen, *Peri Archon* II.9.2.

204. *DN* IV.22 724B (170:6-8). Again, compare Evagrius, Chapter VIII below, 327-328.

205. *CH* IV.4 181B (22:24-23:3) for Zachariah, and XIII.1ff 300B (44:5) for Isaiah.

206. *Ibid.* (23:3-5).

207. *Ibid.* 181BC (23:7-9).

208. *Ibid.* 181CD (23:19-24:1).

209. *CH* XV.9 337C (58:9).

210. Gandillac, 179, note 3.

... toward which angelic beauty the good order of our own hierarchy, as pointing towards it in icons, is assimilated so far as possible, and through it molded, and led up towards the super-essential source of order and of hierarchy²¹¹.

2. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

Our hierarchy is, first and most obviously, the means given us to know and to share in God. It is the icon of the invisible: “the sacred and perceptible representations of intelligible realities, and both guide [χειραγωγία] and way to these things”²¹². As such, it is secondly the God-intended sense or purpose, λόγος, of that entire plane of being that is realized in space, time and matter²¹³. In so far as “the intelligible [the latter applying here to the energies of God] is source and science of the hierarchic things pertaining to the sensible”²¹⁴, our hierarchy makes use of and so consecrates “the sensible things for the more divine ascent from them to the intelligible”²¹⁵. Because the structure of our nature and thus of our intellectual or spiritual mode of apprehension is, unlike angelic simplicity, compounded of matter and spirit and therefore dependent upon discursive or “progressive thought”²¹⁶, it follows that:

... neither is it possible for the thearchic ray to illumine [us] otherwise than by the variety of sacred veils [with which] it has been veiled in a manner facilitating our ascent and duly furnished by a fatherly Providence in a manner natural to our faculties²¹⁷.

What is the structure of this pedagogy, of the “veils” which that are yet intended to reveal?

a) The veils

The “veils” are the stuff of our universe: matter, physical gesture or motion,

211. ... πρὸς ἣν ἡ τῆς παρ’ ἡμῖν ἱεραρχίας εὐταξία κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀφομοιουμένη τὴν ἀγγελικὴν εὐπρέπειαν ὡς ἐν εἰκόσιν ἔξει, τυπουμένη δι’ αὐτῆς καὶ ἀναγομένη πρὸς τὴν ὑπερούσιον ἀπάσης ἱεραρχίας ταξιαρχίαν”. *CH VIII.2 241C* (35:22-25). Note that for Iamblichus the world is also a single ζῶον; *de Myst. IV.12* (des Places) 155-156. For Dionysius this is true of both the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies. The difference lies in the fact that the unity of the Areopagite’s worlds, a unity both organic and binding, discovers itself in Christ.

212. *EH II.3.2 397C* (74:9-10).

213. Vs. Brons, *Gott u.S.* 21-41. See esp. 36 and Brons’ admission that his interpretation of our hierarchy as applying *only* to humanity is “implicit” in the *CD*, not “explicit”.

214. *EH II.3.2 397C* (74:10-11).

215. *EH I.5 377A* (68:3-4). See our discussion of the physical world as ἀναγωγή in Origen and Evagrius, Chapters VI and VIII below, 274-276 and 324-326 respectively.

216. See *DN IV.9 705B* (153:17-154:1).

217. “... οὐδὲ δυνατόν ἑτέρως ἡμῖν ἐπιλάμψαι τὴν θεαρχικὴν ἀκτῖνα μὴ τῇ ποικιλίᾳ τῶν ἱερῶν παραπετασμάτων ἀναγωγικῶς περικεκαλυμμένην καὶ τοῖς καθ’ ἡμᾶς προνοίᾳ πατρικῇ συμφυῶς καὶ οἰκείως διεσκευασμένην”. *CH I.2 121BC* (8:10-13).

and spoken word. Through that which Roques terms the “anagogic condescension of the divine activity”²¹⁸, – a condescension whose core is the Incarnation – these elements in our world have in our hierarchy become “God-bearing”, θεοφόρος. The “ray” of the divine energies is capable of appropriating to itself these basics of the sensible world. It “puts-itself-together-with” the universe of matter, motion, and speech. This is the root meaning of the word “symbol” itself: the “putting-together” or “συμβολή of different natures”²¹⁹.

i) *Matter*

Nothing in our world is utterly opaque to God’s energies. Matter itself bears traces (ἀπτηχήματα) of its Creator and thus possesses a potential for leading “up to the immaterial archetypes”²²⁰. Looking again to his favored solar imagery, Dionysius speaks of the diffusion of the divine light through the levels of creation beginning with the “first matter”²²¹ of the angels:

... the diffusion of the sun’s rays traverses without difficulty the first matter, most translucent of all and through it makes its proper radiance shine most plainly though on encountering the matters that are more opaque, its diffusive manifestation is more reduced, due to the inaptitude of the illumined matters for the transmission of the gift of light, until little by little the action of transmission becomes nearly impossible²²².

“Nearly”, we must stress, but never entirely. It is for this reason that one may speak of participation in God through the medium of material things, of a revelation of the invisible through the visible²²³. It is thus as Dionysius writes in CH I.3, that the matter and form of the Church’s liturgy are given us for participation in God and imitation of the heavenly choirs:

218. Roques, *L’Univers*, esp. 299-300. Note, in view of the Incarnation, that Roques adds that this condescension is also “pour restituer à l’unité”.

219. Koutras, “Ἐννοια” 256. See also Larsen, *Jamblique*, 186-187.

220. CH II.4 144BC (15:4-5). Dionysius is, to be sure, echoing here sentiments which may be found in such Neoplatonists as Iamblichus; see esp. *de Myst.* V.23 (des Places) 178-179 (although not so much for Plotinus: *Enn.* I.8.5 and 6).

221. See Gandillac, 151, note 4, for the explanation that “matter” here — i.e., esp. in reference here to the angels — does not signify “stuff”, but instead “leur caractère de créatures”.

222. “... ἡ τῆς ἡλιακῆς ἀκτίνος διάδοσις εἰς πρώτην ὕλην εὐδιαδότως χωρεῖ τὴν πασῶν διειδεδέστεραν καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς ἐμφανέστερον ἀναλάμπει τὰς οἰκείας μαρμαρυγὰς, προσβάλλουσα δὲ ταῖς παχυτέραις ὕλαις ἀμυδροτέραν ἔχει τὴν διαδοτικὴν ἐπιφάνειαν ἐκ τῆς τῶν φωτιζομένων ὕλῶν πρὸς φωτοδοσίας διαπορθμευτικὴν ἔξιν ἀνεπιτηδεύτοτος καὶ κατὰ σμικρὸν ἐκ τούτου πρὸς τὸ τελείως σχεδὸν ἀδιάδοτον συστέλλεται”. CH XIII.3 301AB (45:2-7).

223. See again Iamblichus, *de Myst.* VII.1 (des Places) 188-189. For the pagans, too, the συμπάθεια enabling this participation (*de Myst.* V.7, 162-163) also carries with it a certain element of grace (V.9-10, 163-165). See also our discussion below of Origen, Chapter VI, 274-276.

... since it would not be possible for our mind to be ordered to that immaterial imitation of the heavenly hierarchies unless it were to make use of the material guide adapted to its nature, reckoning the apparent beauties as copies of the invisible beauty, the sensible perfumes as figures of the intelligible diffusion, the material lights icons of the immaterial gift of light and the discussions of the sacred teachings [images] of the contemplative fullness according to the intellect, the orders of the clerical ranks here below representative of the harmonious habitus [of the mind] ordered toward things divine, and the partaking of the divine Eucharist an icon of the participation in Jesus²²⁴.

This passage, coming early in the CD, is perhaps the most crucial of the entire corpus, a summary of the Dionysian project. It owes directly to Evagrius and, especially, the Macarian Homilies²²⁵. The whole of the sacred μίμησις of our hierarchy rests on the capacity of matter to carry, however much its limitations may obscure, the light of God. Our hierarchy forms, in its entirety, a holy σύμβολον, a figure of the angels' beauty and of God's²²⁶, a meeting of heaven and earth that takes place at once in the assembly of the Church, and within the human heart or intellect.

ii) *Motion*

Matter is never without motion. The material apparatus of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is set within a context of sacred actions, themselves iconic, of ritual gestures no less essentially symbolic than the "lights", "perfumes", etc. employed in the course of the Church's liturgy. In speaking of Baptism, for example, Dionysius tells us that this, "in symbols, is the sacred initiation of divine birth [θεογένεσις]". Nothing is portrayed that is unsuitable to God. Instead one is given to behold "mysteries [αἰνίγματα] of a contemplation worthy of God represented in mirrors natural and suited to human beings"²²⁷. In coming to contemplate this mystery enacted, the whole of the rite, we strive to look up

224. "... ἐπεὶ μηδὲ δυνατόν ἐστι τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς νοῦ, πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνην ἀναταθῆναι τῶν οὐρανίων ἱεραρχῶν μίμησιν τε καὶ θεωρίαν, εἰ μὴ τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν ὑλαία χειραγωγία χρῆσαιτο, τὰ μὲν φαινόμενα κάλλη, τῆς ἀφανοῦς εὐπρεπείας ἀπεικονίσματα λογιζόμενος, καὶ τὰς αἰσθητὰς εὐωδίας ἐκτυπώματα τῆς νοητῆς διαδόσεως· καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ φωτοδοσίας εἰκόνα τὰ ὑλικά φῶτα, καὶ τῆς κατὰ νοῦν θεωρητικῆς ἀποπληρώσεως, τὰς διεξοδικὰς ἱερὰς μαθητείας καὶ τῆς ἐναρμονίου πρὸς τὰ θεῖα καὶ τεταγμένης ἕξεως, τὰς τῶν ἐνθάδε διακοσμήσεων τάξεις καὶ τῆς Ἰησοῦ μετουσίας, τὴν τῆς θειότητος εὐχαριστίας μετάληψιν". CH I.3 121C-124A (8:19-9:6). For the Eucharist as icon, see Chapter IV below, 196-198, and for our brief discussion of the human intellect as mirrored by the rankings of the clergy, see *Ibid.* 187.

225. See below, Chapter IX, 382-385.

226. And, we add, of the beauty of the individual, human soul; see again Chapter IV below, 191-192, 196-198, 202-203, and 220-221.

227. EH II.3.1 397A (73:13-15).

... through sacred ascents to the things accomplished [such that], being sacredly initiated into them, we shall know of which character are the things figured, and of what invisible things they are the icons²²⁸.

Similarly, the rite of the Eucharist is an icon, a symbol:

... For he [the bishop] outlines perceptibly in these things [the rite], as in images, our spiritual life, bringing to view Jesus Christ who, becoming man after our fashion in a manner all pure and unconfused, from the secrecy proper to God took his form beneficently from us²²⁹.

We are reminded once more of the christological element that underlies the whole CD, particularly the EH. It cannot be overlooked. It centers and completes Koutras' otherwise apt definition of "icon" in Dionysius as "the incarnation of God" through which "the sensible world is saved"²³⁰. We are also directed to the reality of ritual gesture as a theophany²³¹. As a last example, we take the bishop's initial censuring of the Church as a calling to mind, a symbol, of the circular motion of Providence. The latter departs from itself to embrace all things and return them to itself, yet it

... abides truly in itself and moves not wholly from its true identity; in the same manner the divine mystery of the synaxis, even though it possesses its source as inclusive, simple and united, is beneficently multiplied in the sacred variety of symbols and penetrates even to all the thearchic iconography, yet is again gathered together in a uniform manner from these same into its proper monad, uniting those who in sacred fashion are led up to it²³².

228. "... ἀναβάσειν ἱεραῖς ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν τελουμένων ἀρχὰς ἀναβλέψαντες καὶ ταύτας ἱερῶς μυηθέντες ἐπιγνωσόμεθα, τίνων εἰσι χαρακτήρων τὰ ἐκτυπώματα καὶ τίνων ἀφανῶν αἱ εἰκόνες". EH II.3.2 397C (74:5-7). For the use of εἰκόν with Baptism, see also II.3.7 404B (78:5-6).

229. "Διαγράφει γὰρ ἐν τούτοις αἰσθητῶς ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγων Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν, τὴν νοητὴν ἡμῶν ὡς ἐν εἰκόσι ζῶν, ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ τὸ θεῖον κρυφίου, τῇ παντελεῖ καὶ ἀσυγχύτῳ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐνανθρωπήσει φιλανθρώπως ἐξ ἡμῶν εἰδοποιούμενον". EH III.3.13 444C (93:14-16).

230. Koutras, "Ἔννοια", 256.

231. See our discussion of this passage and the crucial ὑπ' ὄψιν in Chapter IV below, 199-202.

232. "... περὶ ἑαυτὴν ὄντως οὕσα καὶ τῆς οἰκείας ὁλως οὐ παρακινουμένη ταυτότητος. Ὡσαύτως ἡ θεία τῆς συνάξεως τελετή, κἂν ἐνιαίαν καὶ ἀπλὴν ἔχουσα καὶ συνεπτυγμένην ἀρχὴν, εἰς τὴν ἱερὰν ποικιλίαν τῶν συμβόλων φιλανθρώπως πληθύνεται καὶ μέχρι πάσης χωρὶ τῆς ἱεραρχικῆς εἰκονογραφίας, ἀλλ' ἐνοειδῶς ἐκ τούτων αὐθις εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν μονάδα συνάγεται καὶ ἐνοποιεῖ τοὺς ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἱερῶς ἀναγομένους". EH III.3.3 429A (82:20-83:3).

This passage also indicates the three levels of application observed in *CH I.3* above. It describes an action taking place 1) within the Church that is also both 2) the depiction of God's action throughout the universe and 3) of the simultaneous return (ἐπιστροφή) of the soul to communion with God within its procession (πρόοδος) outwards in cooperation (συνεργεία) with Providence.

The forms of the rites are more than a calling to mind of Providence. They are also a participation in God's activity, a true συμβολή of physical form and gesture with divine grace. Thus:

The whole order of priests, having been gathered in hierarchic order, and having communicated in the most divine things, pauses with thanksgiving, recognizing in due measure [i.e. in accordance with their respective ranks] and celebrating the grace of the divine operations²³³.

On the one hand, it is true that the rites are given us to contemplate:

that having reflected... upon its [the consecration of the μύρον] parts according to the sacred icons [rites], we may thus be led up through the parts to its unity by means of hierarchic contemplations²³⁴.

The consecration of the μύρον is indeed an image [ἄγαλμα] of the "deiform virtue", its pattern in accord with the "intelligible beauty" of its prototype²³⁵. On the other hand, it is also true that the rites are genuinely efficacious modes or channels for the threefold divine activity of purification, illumination, and perfection. The psalmody sung during the rite thus

... perfectly purifies those wanting in complete purity, leads those who are holy to the divine images and their vision and communion, and establishes those who are altogether holy in blessed and spiritual visions, filling that in them which is in the form of the One with the One, and making them one²³⁶.

233. "Ἡ πᾶσα τῶν ἱερῶν διακόσμησις ἱεραρχικῶς συναχθεῖσα καὶ τοῖς θειοτάτοις κοινωνήσασα μετ' εὐχαριστίας ἱερᾶς καταλήγει, τὰς τῶν θεουργιῶν ἀναλόγως ἐπιγνοῦσα καὶ ὑμνήσασα χάριτας". *EH III.3.15* 445B (94:11-13).

234. "... κατὰ τὰς ἱερὰς εἰκόνας ἐπισκοπήσαντες, οὕτω πρὸς ἐν αὐτῇ διὰ τῶν μερῶν ἱεραρχικαῖς θεωρίαις ἀναχθισόμεθα. *EH IV.1* 472D (95:5-7). See also *IV.3.1* 473D (96:17-18), where we are directed to go within (εἴσω) the theomimetic veil in order to discover the intellections of the archetype (ἀρχέτυπος νόησις). Dionysius is clearly basing himself here, at least in part, on the Church architecture of his time. For a discussion on the use of sanctuary veils at the time of the *CD*, esp. in order to conceal the altar, see T. F. Mathews, *Early Churches of Constantinople* (1971) 162-171; A. M. Schneider, "Liturgie und Kirchenbau in Syrien" *NAG* (1949) 56-68; and particularly Carl Schneider, "Καταπέτασμα" *Kyrios* 1 (Königsberg: 1936) 57-73.

235. *Ibid.* 473B (96:2-5).

236. "... τοὺς δὲ πρὸς τὸ εἶναι πανάγνους ἐνδεεῖς τελέως ἀποκαθαίρουσιν, τοὺς δὲ ἱεροὺς ἄγουσιν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας εἰκόνας καὶ ἐποψίας αὐτῶν καὶ κοινωνίας, ἐστιῶσι δὲ τοὺς πανιέρους ἐν μακαρίοις καὶ νοητοῖς θεάμασιν ἀποπληροῦσαι τὸ ἐνοειδὲς αὐτῶν τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ἐνοποιῶσαι". *EH IV.3.3* 477A (98:9-13).

iii) *Word*

Psalmody leads us to the third constituent of the veils: the word, spoken or written. The word carries with it the whole human realm of idea or discourse. For Dionysius, the word can only refer to Holy Scripture – together with the oral teachings of the Apostles and saints. One cannot emphasize too much his insistence on revelation and Scripture as divinely-given²³⁷. The point is repeated at the beginning of each of the CD's four major treatises²³⁸.

From the opening chapter of the EH, for example, we learn that:

... that which is given to them [the angels] in a uniform and inclusive manner is vouchsafed to us from the divinely-delivered Scriptures by means of a variety and multiplication of different symbols. For the Scriptures are the essence of our hierarchy. These Scriptures are... most august... they have been vouchsafed to us from our inspired and sacred consecrators in theological and holy writings and letters, and, furthermore, whatever has come from the same holy men by means of the more immaterial initiation – as indeed to people somehow already neighbors of the Celestial Hierarchy – from mind to mind by means of speech, at once bodiless and yet more immaterial as being without writing, by which our holy guides were initiated. Neither did these things come to us from the inspired hierarchs in intuitions obvious to the commonality of the faithful, but were delivered rather in sacred symbols. For not everyone is holy nor, as Scripture says, is knowledge for all²³⁹.

Let us briefly examine this passage. Once again we find the difference between our mode of apprehension and the angels'. We apprehend the truth through symbols, a term that embraces both the physical and the notional²⁴⁰. Every real insight or grace of intellection and comprehension as to the nature of the real discovers its source, "essence", in the symbols transmitted to us via

237. For the Neoplatonist background to the expressions λόγια and θεοπαράδοτα, see Koch, *Beziehungen*, 38-48. For their appearance in patristic literature, see Lampe, 629, 805-806.

238. See *CH* I.2 121A (7:11-12); *EH* I.4 376B (67:4-6); *DN* I.1 588A (108:6-8); I.3 589B (111:6-12); I.4 589D (112:7-10); and *MT* I.1 997A (141:2-3).

239. "... ἡμῖν δὲ τὸ ἐκείναις ἐνιαίως τε καὶ συνεπτυγμένως δωρηθὲν ἐκ τῶν θεοπαράδοτων λογίων, ὡς ἡμῖν ἐφικτὸν, ἐν ποικιλίᾳ καὶ πλήθει διαιρετῶν συμβόλων δεδωρηται. Οὐσία γὰρ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεραρχίας ἐστὶ τὰ θεοπαράδοτα λόγια. Σεπτότατα δὲ λόγια ταῦτα... πρὸς τῶν ἐνθέων ἡμῶν ἱεροτελεστῶν ἐν ἀγιογράφοις ἡμῖν καὶ θεολογικαῖς δεδώρηται δέλτοις καὶ μὴν ὅσα πρὸς τῶν αὐτῶν ἱερῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀύλοτέρα μύσει καὶ γείτονί πως ἤδη τῆς οὐρανίας ἱεραρχίας ἐκ νοὸς εἰς νοῦν διὰ μέσου λόγου σωματικοῦ μὲν ἀύλοτέρου δὲ ὁμως, γραφῆς ἐκτὸς οἱ καθηγεμόνες ἡμῶν ἐμυθήσαν, οὐδὲ ταῦτα τῶν ἐνθέων ἱεραρχῶν εἰς τὸ τῆς ἱερουργίας κοινὸν ἀπαρακαλύπτους νοήσεσιν, ἀλλ' ἐν συμβόλοις ἱεροῖς παραδεδωκότων. Ἔστι γὰρ οὐ πᾶς ἱερὸς οὐδὲ πάντων, ὡς τὰ λόγια φησιν, ἡ γνῶσις". *EH* I.4 376BC (67:4-15).

240. Recall Chapter I, 70-74.

Scripture. What of the revelations or intuitions given us orally by the Apostles and saints that also possess authority? It appears to us that Dionysius is doing two related things here. He is first of all lending expression to the notion of tradition as the saints' continuous witness to the life in God granted us by and in the Church. Secondly, he is defending the principle of the *lex orandi*: the public worship of the Church is itself an authoritative expression of divine truth and source of private inspiration and contemplation²⁴¹ – indeed, is even more the authoritative image, ἀκριβὴς εἰκών, than the Scriptural images, as based upon a “more immaterial initiation”²⁴².

The final two sentences of the passage might be read as betraying a dangerous esotericism. Dionysius speaks at least once elsewhere²⁴³ of Scripture's “deliberate” concealment of the “hidden truth” from the many, and he concludes again with the passage from St. Paul concerning the γνῶσις which “is not for all” (cf. I Cor 7:7). Gandillac rightly notes a distinction between the Apostle, who “was simply opposing idolaters to people who know Christ”, and Dionysius' differentiation between “those who deserve to possess the truth and those who may only receive it under the guise of parables”²⁴⁴. Nonetheless, it does not appear to us that the Areopagite is doing much more than referring here to a basic fact of the spiritual life. There are degrees of knowledge, of receptivity to truth, and of advancement in it. We have only to recall the distinction drawn in Heb 5:13-14 between “milk” and “strong meat”, or even that in I Cor 13:11 between the child and the man (to quote from the Pauline corpus alone). The deepest things of God require sanctity:

For we must not consider that the appearance of the [sacred] compositions are formed for their own sake, [they] are rather to shield the unspeakable and invisible science from the many, that the all-holy things be not easily grasped by the profane, but instead revealed alone to the true lovers of sanctity who have packed away every childish fantasy concerning the sacred symbols and are thus capable, through simplicity of intellect and capacity for contemplative virtue, to cross over to the simple and supernatural and transcendent truth of the symbols²⁴⁵.

241. See C. A. Bernard, “Les formes de théologie chez Denys l'Aréopagite” *Greg* 59 (1978) 44.

242. See above, Chapter I, 73, note 210. See also Rorem's remarks on the “more immaterial” in *Symbols*, 118-125. Rorem does, however, rather over-emphasize in our view the Neoplatonist preference for the oral to the written. While doubtless a feature of Dionysius' thought, we must also recall the *lex orandi*'s singular importance for the patristic writers, as for example in an Irenaeus or a Basil. See Louth, *Denys*, 26-27.

243. *CH* II.2 140B (11:16-20).

244. Gandillac, 77 note 2.

245. “Μὴ γὰρ οἴώμεθα τὰ φαινόμενα τῶν συνθημάτων ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν ἀναπεπλάσθαι, προβεβλήσθαι δὲ τῆς ἀπορρήτου καὶ ἀθεάτου τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐπιστήμης, ὥς μὴ τοῖς βεβήλοις εὐχέριωτα εἶναι τὰ πανίερα, μόνοις δὲ ἀνακαλυπτέσθαι τοῖς τῆς θεότητος γνησίοις ἐρασταῖς, ὥς πᾶσαν τὴν παιδαριώδη φαντασίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν συμβόλων ἀποσκευαζομέ-

The “sacred veils” that include the word of Scripture and the forms of the Church’s worship are in essence a collection or sequence of contemplations. They embrace an ascending series of revelations adapted to the believer’s progress in love, simplicity, purification from selfish imagination, and consequent capacity for contemplation²⁴⁶. They are, indeed, more than simply a scale of θεωρία. The icon that they constitute is “by its very essence χειραγωγή”²⁴⁷. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is therefore (and we do not here exhaust its significance) that which takes us “by the hand” to bring us into knowledge of the truth and shape our souls in accordance with the divine archetype in order that each may become a faithful image of the divine virtue.

b) Our symbols and their apprehension

The icon or symbol, and so our hierarchy itself, is of necessity anagogic. It effects the education, paideia, of the believer who is called upon to discern “within the schemes and images the divine intention underlying them”²⁴⁸. By its nature the symbol, a putting-together or indwelling of the divine in matter, gesture, or word, requires this continual effort toward apprehension – as well, of course, as the presence or power of God actively at work in assisting the anagogy. It implies an increasing process of purification, enlightenment, and perfection, a continual affirmation and negation that bears witness both to the nature of a symbol as a meeting of created and uncreated, and to the double aspect of God’s own being, at once hidden and revealed. Here we discover a convergence of the three triads of spiritual activity: purification - illumination - perfection, ἀφαίρεσις - ἄγνωσις - ἔνωσις, and direct - spiral - and circular spiritual motion. All three take place simultaneously at different levels, i.e., according to the believer’s degree of conformity to the divine. “The sacred and mystical unfoldings [ἀναπτύξεις]”²⁴⁹ of the symbols constituting the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy require a continual progress from the sanctified human intelligence. The “science” of our hierarchy is, as Roques notes, “one and the same act which simultaneously attaches, elevates, and liberates the mind”²⁵⁰. The demand is unceasing and our potential progress

νοῦς καὶ ἱκανοῖς διαβαίνειν ἀπλότητι νοῦ καὶ θεωρητικῆς δυνάμεως ἐπιτηδειότητι, πρὸς τὴν ἀπλὴν καὶ ὑπερφυῆ καὶ ὑπεριδρυμένην τῶν συμβόλων ἀλήθειαν”. *Ep.* IX.1 1105C (197:1-8). See also our discussion of Origen, Chapter VI below, 277-278, for a parallel in patristic literature to Dionysius’ insistence on varying capacities, dependent upon holiness, for the vision of the invisible reality beneath the apparent, as well as Evagrius on “pure prayer” and his suspicion of the imagination, Chapter VIII, 331-332. See also Macarius in Chapter IX, 377-378.

246. Note that intellectual ability, worldly intelligence, does not constitute a Dionysian prerequisite for progress in the divine “science”.

247. Koutras, “Ἔννοια”, 257. For the χειραγωγή, note our citation from Gregory of Nyssa, Chapter VII below, 295-296.

248. Roques, “Contemplation” *DSp* 2.1887. See also Koutras, “Ἔννοια”, 249-250 and 256, as well as Chapter VI below on Origen, 274-279.

249. *DN* IX.5 913A (211:2); also *CH* II.3 141A (12:17-13:3).

250. *L’Univers*, 201.

without limit, because the depths to which a given symbol points, which are in a sense carried within it, themselves have no end:

It is thus necessary for us, instead of [resting with] the common suppositions concerning them, to pass within the sacred symbols in a manner befitting holiness, and in no way to esteem them lightly that are the offspring and figures of the divine likenesses, and visible images of the visions that are ineffable and beyond nature. For indeed, it is not just the super-essential lights, and the intelligibles, and – quite simply – divine things that are adorned by the materially figurative symbols, as the super-essential God is said to be ‘fire,’ and ‘burning’ the intelligible sayings of God; but, in addition, the deiform dispositions of angels both contemplated and contemplating are also delineated in varied shapes and in many forms and fiery figures. And [it is thus also necessary] to receive the image of ‘fire’ in one way when used in reference to God who is beyond intellection, and in another way when it refers to his spiritual providences or wills, and in still another way with respect to the angels... to the one [it is referred] as cause, to the other as existing, and to the last by participation²⁵¹.

The resonances of the symbols are thus infinite. This brings us to the fact that our hierarchy represents the whole revelation of God and the angels. It is the sole means given us for ascent up and into contemplation of the created intelligible world, then to the uncreated wills or energies, and ultimately to the darkness surrounding God as he is in himself. From the first turning away from error to the highest rapture of the mystic vision, everything, all ascent, takes place within the forms and activities of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. As we shall see in the following chapters, and as was suggested in the quotation from CH I.3 above, the whole CD leads inward into the altar and the mystery that the latter represents²⁵².

c) The icon of the ascent: ministers and ministered

i) *Clergy and laity: a spatial and spiritual ordering*

The essence of our hierarchy is revealed in holy Scripture. The first manifestation or flowering of that essence is:

251. “Χρη τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀντὶ τῆς δημώδους περὶ αὐτῶν ὑπολήψεως, εἴσω τῶν ἱερῶν συμβόλων ἱεροπρεπῶς διαβαίνειν καὶ μὴ ἀτιμάζειν αὐτά, τῶν θείων ὄντα χαρακτήρων ἔκγονα καὶ ἀποτυπώματα καὶ εἰκόνας ἐμφανεῖς τῶν ἀπορρήτων καὶ ὑπερφυῶν θεαμάτων. Καὶ γὰρ οὐ μόνον τὰ ὑπερούσια φῶτα καὶ τὰ νοητὰ καὶ ἀπλῶς τὰ θεῖα τοῖς τυπωτικοῖς διαποικίλλεται συμβόλοις, ὡς πῦρ ὁ ὑπερούσιος θεὸς λεγόμενος καὶ τὰ νοητὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγια πεπυρωμένα. Προσέτι δὲ καὶ τῶν νοητῶν ἅμα καὶ νοερῶν ἀγγέλων οἱ θεοειδεῖς διάκονοι ποικίλαις μορφαῖς διαγράφονται καὶ πολυειδέσι καὶ ἐμπυρίοις σχηματισμοῖς. Καὶ ἄλλως χρη τὴν αὐτὴν τοῦ πυρὸς εἰκόνα κατὰ τοῦ ὑπὲρ νόησιν θεοῦ λεγομένην ἐκλαβεῖν, ἄλλως δὲ κατὰ τῶν νοητῶν αὐτοῦ προνοιῶν ἢ λόγων καὶ ἄλλως ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, καὶ τὴν μὲν κατ’ αἰτίαν, τὴν δὲ καθ’ ὑπαρξιν, τὴν δὲ κατὰ μέθεξιν...”. *Ep. IX.2* 1108CD (199:9-200:8).

252. Here is the truth of P. Rorem’s correct insistence that the *Mystical Theology* is at the center of the CD (e.g. *Commentary*, 200ff), though not as a “solvent” of Dionysius’ Christian pretensions, but in fact as their fulfillment.

... the threefold virtue of the holy rites of the sacraments, the purification and brilliant illumination of the sacred divine birth [Baptism] received from Scripture, the perfecting knowledge and science of the theurgies [given by] the synaxis and the consecration of the chrism, through which [threefold power] is accomplished in sacred manner the unifying ascent to, and blessed communion with, the Thearchy²⁵³.

Our “sacred order” follows this “division of every hierarchical activity into the most divine mysteries” with the participants in those mysteries, “the inspired men who are instructed and initiated in them, and those who are being initiated by them in sacred manner”²⁵⁴. The full composition of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is thus the Scriptural revelation expressed in the triad of sacraments whose saving activity is realized in the subordinate triads of the clergy, the ministers of that activity, and of the laity who receive the clergy’s ministrations.

The priestly order of bishop [ιεράρχης], priest and deacon [λειτουργός] do, however, represent²⁵⁵ those among the faithful who have realized in themselves the first stages of the threefold process which is the activity within the created world of divine Providence:

... for it is necessary for those going to the all-pure and sacred activity to have been completely cleansed from the last fantasies of the soul, and, as far as possible, to approach it through likeness with it, for thus shall be [the theophanies of the supra-mundane rays] more clearly discerned about them. These desire that their proper glory should pass through ever more completely and more transparently to the splendors of the like-formed mirrors [the clergy]²⁵⁶.

Here again, as Roques notes²⁵⁷, and with the same metaphors of sun and fire already encountered in the DN and CH, “the principle of the diffusion of God’s gifts to the superior orders and through them to the inferiors is maintained and illustrated”. The clergy are the “mirrors” of the thearchic ray, the media – them-

253. “Τῆς μὲν οὖν ἁγίας τῶν τελετῶν ἱερουργίας ἡ τρισσὴ δύναμις ὕμνηται τῆς μὲν ἱερᾶς θεογενεσίας ἐκ τῶν λογίων ἀποδειχθείσης καθάρσεως καὶ φωτιστικῆς ἐλλάμψεως, τῆς συνάξεως δὲ καὶ τῆς τοῦ μύρου τελετῆς τελεωτικῆς τῶν θεουργιῶν γνώσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης, δι’ ἧς ἱερῶς ἢ πρὸς τὴν θεαρχίαν ἐνοποιὸς ἀναγωγὴ καὶ μακαριωτάτη κοινωνία τελεσιουργεῖται”. *EH* V.1.3 504BC (106:17-22).

254. *EH* V.1.1 501A (104:11-15).

255. See again our discussion above, 109, and Chapter IV, 208-214.

256. “Τοὺς... ἐπὶ τὴν παναγεστάτην ἰόντας ἱερουργίαν ἀποκεκαθάρθαι δεῖ καὶ τὰς ἐσχάτας τῆς ψυχῆς φαντασίας καὶ δι’ ὁμοιότητος αὐτῇ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν προσιέναι. Φανότερας γὰρ οὕτω τὰς θεοφανείας περιαυγασθήσονται τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων μαρμαρυγῶν εἰς τὴν τῶν ὁμοειδῶν ἐσόπτρων ἀγλαίαν ὀλκώτερον καὶ διαυγέστερον ἐφιέντων διῆναι τὴν οἰκείαν αἴγλην”. *EH* III.3.10 440AB (89:21-90:3).

257. *L’Univers*, 197.

selves thus the icons and channels on our plane of being for revelation – through whom the saving and transforming knowledge and activity of God descend finally to us:

... for those who, speaking symbolically, are ever present about the divine altar behold and hear the divine things clearly revealed to them, and, proceeding in the manner of the Good outside the divine veils [the curtain or screen blocking the sanctuary], manifest to the obedient monks and to the holy people and the orders still in a state of purification, in a manner according to the latter's deserts, the sacred things which they have preserved well and purely²⁵⁸.

Among the orders of the laity the monks are those who stand at the height of knowledge and contemplation. They receive the names of *θεραπευταί* or of *μοναχοί* from their "pure service and attendance upon God", and their "undivided and unified mode of life, unifying them through sacred concentration of their divisions into a deiform unity and God-loving perfection"²⁵⁹. Even these, though, are assigned places outside the doors and veils of the altar area because, "in relation to their order and knowledge", they are still "closer to the people than to the priestly ranks"²⁶⁰. If this applies to the monks, whose *τάξις* is the one in process of perfection (*τελειουμένη*), then it is still more the case with the middle order, the baptized laity. The latter is the *θεωρητική τάξις*, the one in process of illumination as being

... purified from every unholy stain and possessing all pure and unmoving the foundation of its proper spirit, it is brought over in priestly fashion to the contemplative condition and power, and communes in the most divine symbols proper to it... and in due measure is winged by their [i.e. the symbols'] anagogic powers towards the divine love of their science²⁶¹.

In comparison, however, to the hierarch who "is ever led up by the thearchic

258. "... οἱ περὶ τὸ θεῖον συμβολικῶς εἰπεῖν ἐστηκότες θυσιαστήριον ὁρῶσι καὶ ἀκούουσι τὰ θεῖα τηλαυγῶς αὐτοῖς ἀποκαλυπτόμενα καὶ προϊόντες ἀγαθοειδῶς ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω τῶν θεῶν παραπετασμάτων τοῖς ὑπηκόοις θεραπευταῖς καὶ τῷ ἱερῷ λαῷ καὶ ταῖς καθαιρομέναις τάξεσιν ἐκφαίνουσι κατ' ἀξίαν τὰ ἱερὰ τὰ καλῶς ἄχραντα διαφυλαχθέντα...". Ep. VIII.1 1089A (177:3-8).

259. EH VI.1.3 532D-533A (116:15-19).

260. Ep. VIII.1 1088D-1089A (176:10-177:1); also EH VI.1.3 532D-533A (116:6-23). See our discussion in Chapter VIII, 328-329, of the monk's role in Evagrius and Dionysius' "clericalism" as a possible reaction to it, as well as the currents in Syrian monasticism, i.e., "Messalianism", Chapter IX below 354-358.

261. "... ἡ καθαρθεῖσα πάσης ἀνιέρου κηλίδος καὶ πάντα γνον ἐσχηκυῖα τὴν τοῦ οἰκείου νοὸς ἀκίνητον ἰδρυσιν ἐπὶ τὴν θεωρητικὴν ἔξιν καὶ δύναμιν ἱερουργικῶς μετὰ γεται καὶ κοινωνεῖ τοῖς κατ' αὐτὴν θειοτάτοις συμβόλοις... καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεῖον τῆς ἐπιστήμης αὐτῶν ἔρωτα ταῖς ἀναγωγικαῖς αὐτῶν δυνάμεσιν ἀναλόγως ἀναπτρουμένη". EH VI.1.2 532BC (115:20-116:4).

Spirit to the holy principles [ἀρχαί] of the things accomplished”, the contemplative faculty or illumination of the laity is limited to the mere vision of the symbols: “the many only peek [παρακύψαντες] at the divine symbols”²⁶².

Still more distant, spiritually and physically, is the final order of those who are “being purified”. These are the non-baptized together with those under penance or possessed by devils²⁶³ – the latter having failed to conquer the passions and the disordered motions of evil. This group is forbidden attendance at the holiest of the sacred rites²⁶⁴. Physically, they are further removed than the laity who occupy the middle or nave of the Church. Instead, they crowd at the doors of the nave in the narthex. Again, spiritually and physically, they represent the last echo of holiness. Beyond them, outside the doors of the Church, lies an existence entirely sunk in deception and enslavement to the “seeming good [δοκοῦσα εὐπία-θεια]” of the world, the flesh, and the devil²⁶⁵.

ii) *Altar to doors: the Church at prayer an icon of Providence*

Reversing the order of progressive distance from the altar, we discover in the very physical arrangement of the Church itself²⁶⁶, and of the orders of laity and clergy, a process of concentration, a gathering and intensification of the mystery at once divine and yet manifest among and through humans and the stuff of their being, at once revealed and yet increasingly hidden as we approach its core and heart. From the world of darkness and error outside the doors, to the purified orders awaiting in the porch the hour of their entry (or re-entry) into the body of the Church and full citizenship in the Christian πολιτεία; to the laity occupying the nave, full participants indeed though still at the first stages of knowledge; to

262. *EH* III.2 428A (81:10-11).

263. See *EH* III.3.6 432C-436D (84:22-88:9).

264. *EH* III.2 425C (80:14-16) and IV.2 473A (95:9-12).

265. *EH* III.3.7 433D-436A (86:17-24).

266. See the article by Bernard, “Les formes de la théologie”, 47, where the author notes the reflection of “la contemplation spirituelle” in “la symbolique architecturale ou picturale”, both of which, again “se réfèrent à une expérience spirituelle”. We noted above (note 234) the articles touching on the background of Church architecture in Dionysius’ day. Concerning pictorial art and its presence in the Christian Churches of the pre-iconoclastic period, see: F. Diekamp, *OCA*, vol. 117 (Roma: 1938) 107-153; P. J. Alexander, “Hypatius of Ephesus: A Note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century” *HTR* XLV (1952) 177-184; A. H. Armstrong, “Some Comments on the Development of the Theology of Images” *SP* IX (1963) 123-125; N. H. Baynes, “The Icons before Iconoclasm” *HTR* XLIV (1951) esp. 93-95; J. Gouillard, “Hypatios d’Ephèse” *REB* 19 (1961) 63-75; E. Kitzinger, “The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm” *DOP* 8 (1954) 83-150, esp. 138; and C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* (1972) 3-115. There are also the large monographs by H. Koch, *Die altchristliche Bilderfrage nach den literarischen quellen* (1917) and W. Eilliger, *Die Stellung der alten Christen zu den Bildern in den ersten vier Jahrhunderten* (1930) 1-98; and *Zur Entstehung und frühen Entwicklung der altchristlichen Bildkunst* (1934) 1-284. Dionysius is certainly part of, and a contributor toward, the movement in favor of imagery that saw its most momentous development, as Mango (22) notes, in the mass conversions and liturgical development of the fourth century. See also our Concluding Remarks below, 397.

the monks at the gates of the sanctuary in “pure attendance upon God” and the contemplations brought them by the clergy within the enclosure; to the deacons who guard the gates within and without²⁶⁷ and who are charged with the task of purification; to the priests who illumine the faithful and guide the initiates to the divine visions (i.e., the physical sight) of the sacraments²⁶⁸, who within the sanctuary surround the altar and the hierarch as the Seraphim stand about the Godhead²⁶⁹, and who receive communion from the bishop directly within the holy place²⁷⁰, to the hierarch himself, “the inspired and divine man instructed in all sacred knowledge, in whom indeed the whole hierarchy belonging to him [ἡ κατ’ αὐτὸν ἱεραρχία] is accomplished and made known”²⁷¹, whose proper:

... essence and ἀναλογία it is to be perfected in divine things and deified, and to transmit to those subordinates according to the merit of each the sacred deification which has come to pass in him from God²⁷²,

we witness an increasing drawing up and into the altar – and thus into the bishop who stands immediately before it – of all sacred virtue, activity, and knowledge. It is on the altar that the Scriptures, essence of our hierarchy, rest, from it that they are proclaimed, and on it again that the great sacraments of the Church, particularly the Eucharist, are accomplished: the representations of Christ’s “theurgy” which itself is the “recapitulation of all theology [i.e., Scripture]”²⁷³. Before the altar stands the bishop in whom the powers²⁷⁴ and science of the hierarchy are realized, and through whom all the lower clergy and laity participate in those same virtues and knowledge:²⁷⁵ “he effects [ἐνεργεῖ] the mysteries of our hierarchy through all the sacred orders”²⁷⁶. It is on his head that the Scriptures are placed inasmuch as he is the recipient of all “perfecting power and science”²⁷⁷, “the one who reveals the judgments of the Thearchy”²⁷⁸. In view of

267. *EH* V.1.6 508AB (108:18-109:12).

268. *Ibid.* 505D-508A (108:8-13).

269. *EH* IV.3.6 480D (100:9-12).

270. *EH* III.3.14 445A (93:26-94:3).

271. *EH* I.3 373C (66:5-6). In the phrase “ἡ κατ’ αὐτὸν ἱεραρχία”, there is perhaps a double sense. The phrase can mean, and has usually been taken as signifying, the actual (local) Church as summed up in the person of its bishop. On the other hand, it may also indicate the bishop’s own inner hierarchy, i.e., the powers of his soul or intellect – precisely what we find disordered in the monk Demophilus (*Ep.* VIII). The bishop is thus himself the temple (ναός) of God (see *EH* 3.7 433C [86:10-11]).

272. “... ἡ κατ’ αὐτὸν οὐσία καὶ ἀναλογία καὶ τάξις ἔχει, τελεσθῆναι κατὰ τὰ θεῖα καὶ θεωθῆναι καὶ τοῖς ὑποβεβηκόσι μεταδοῦναι κατ’ ἀξίαν ἐκάστω τῆς ἐγγενομένης αὐτῷ θεόθεν ἱερᾶς θεώσεως...”. *EH* I.2 372D (65:2-4).

273. *EH* III.3.5 432B (84:14-21).

274. *EH* V.1.7 508C (109:13-18).

275. *EH* V.1.5 505A (107:13-16).

276. *Ibid.* 505B (107:19).

277. *EH* VI.3.7 513C (113:18-19).

278. *EH* VII.3.7 561C (127:16-17). See also *Ibid.* “angel of the Lord God Almighty”, (127:17-18) and 564A, “interpreter [ὑποφύτης]” of the thearchic Justice” (128:4-5).

the fact that he quotes him earlier in the CD²⁷⁹, it seems likely Dionysius is saying with St. Ignatius of Antioch: "Where is the bishop, there is also Christ and his Church"²⁸⁰.

We would maintain that, under the guise of Neoplatonic vocabulary, this is exactly what he is saying. The bishop occupies the place of Christ "in whom every hierarchy is accomplished"²⁸¹. Reversing our perspective once again, we may see in the bishop standing before the altar the icon of the Thearchy, "the source of this hierarchy, the fount of life, the essence of goodness, the unique cause of being"²⁸². Through the bishop, the "threefold virtue" of the sacraments, like the primordial outpouring of the hidden God's energies streaming into creation and extending from the angels to the last traces of being and even of non-being, pour out to penetrate the whole of the ecclesiastical polity, beginning with the priests and, in descending order together with diminishing *éclat*, extending to the deacons, the monks, the laity, and, most obscurely, to the orders of those not yet purified. Finally, it disperses and disappears from view in the night of ignorance and sin outside the doors. It is therefore no mere metaphor on Dionysius' part when he speaks of the powers of the sacraments, flowing out from the bishop at the altar, as "the perfecting icons of the thearchic power"²⁸³, or of the dispositions of our hierarchy as "icons of the divine energies"²⁸⁴. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is the "hierarchic icon of the divine"²⁸⁵, an active power and living participant in the divine archetype. The original outflowing of God's energies into the darkness of non-being and then of creation is thus re-presented in the initial censuring of the bishop whose tour of the Church is a genuine realization of the activity of Providence that it typifies. It is the same energy of God working in and revealed in the bishop here which established, preserves, and saves the worlds, and that now, "through this inspired and hierarchic harmony", wills that "each participate, so far as he is capable, in him who is... Beautiful, Wise, and Good"²⁸⁶.

d) A gnostic vision?

i) *The revelation of a divinized cosmos*

One scholar has accused the Areopagite of a "symbolic gnosticism"²⁸⁷. While we do not understand the precise meaning of this expression, we do admit that the picture just drawn of light not of this world streaming from a hidden center to

279. DN IV.12 709B (157:10-11). See our discussion of Ignatius and Dionysius in Chapter V below, 242-246.

280. *Ep. ad. Symr.* VIII (PG V, 852A).

281. EH V.1.5 505B (107:16-17).

282. EH I.3 373C (66:6-7).

283. EH V.1.5 505B (107:21-23).

284. EH V.1.7 508C (109:22) and 509A (110:3-5).

285. *Ibid.* 508D (110:2).

286. EH I.2 373A (65:7-8).

287. J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (1969) 68ff.

penetrate the serried ranks of initiates and finally to disappear into the blackness outside the shrine might give the impression of gnosticism. Such is not, however, the case. Dionysius' God, while supra-mundane, is never "in his ultimate meaning contra-mundane", nor is his creation "an evil and alien order"²⁸⁸. These hallmarks of classical gnosticism are in no way a part of the CD. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy represents instead the divinely-granted and sole means of salvation for a creation which, through humanity and the deceit of the demons, has fallen into the "ways of non-being and danger of destruction"²⁸⁹. It is not set up in opposition to the world. Rather, to cite von Semmelroth, "there is no area on the earth that possesses stability outside of the hierarchically ordered Church"²⁹⁰. It is not the denial of the sensible world, but instead its divinely revealed meaning, its justification, such that the sensible becomes a carrier of the divine, "a field of symbols that can and must introduce human intelligence to the intelligible world... that constitutes the life of the Church, the angelic beings, and the divinity"²⁹¹. Through and in our hierarchy, our world becomes "itself essentially a revelation of God"²⁹², a declaration of, and a sharing in, the Creator:

... we behold our own [hierarchy] adapted to our condition, multiplied in the variety of sacred symbols by means of which we are hierarchically conducted up in the measure proper to us to the deification that is in the form of the One, to both God and divine virtue²⁹³.

The insistence upon virtue is important. Our hierarchy is "something symbolic... in manner analogous to us using things sensible" in order to "lead us up via sensible things to divine contemplations"²⁹⁴. Yet the process is not one involving knowledge alone:

... [we] do not participate uniformly in him... but as the divine balance distributes to each according to his deserts²⁹⁵.

This stress on conformity to divine virtue, on our hierarchy as an assimilation to God who is "truly Good, truly Wise, truly Beautiful", is the final proof against the accusation of gnosticism. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is a single organism, "the all-embracing intent [λόγος] of all the holy ones subject to it"²⁹⁶. Thus:

288. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* 2d ed. (1963) 250-251.

289. *EH* III.3.11 440D (91:8).

290. "Ausstrahlende Licht", 493.

291. Roques, *L'Univers*, 53.

292. Von Semmelroth, "Ausstrahlende Licht", 499.

293. "... τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς δὲ ὁρῶμεν ἀναλόγως ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς τῇ τῶν αἰσθητῶν συμβόλων ποικιλίᾳ πληθυνομένην, ὑφ' ᾧ ἱεραρχικῶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἐνοειδῆ θέωσιν ἐν συμμετρίᾳ τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀναγόμεθα [Θεόν τε καὶ θείαν ἀρετὴν]". *EH* I.2 373A (65:10-13).

294. *EH* I.5 377A (68:2-4).

295. "... μετέχουσι δὲ οὐκ ἐνιαίως ταύτου τε καὶ ἐνὸς ὄντος, ἀλλ' ὥς ἐκάστῳ τὰ θεῖα ζυγὰ διανέμει κατ' ἁξίαν...". *EH* I.2 373B (65:16-17).

296. *EH* I.3 373C (65:23).

By means of the love for the beautiful which stretches forth to him [Christ] and lifts us up with it, [it] folds up our many differences together and having made them into one divine life, condition, and activity, it grants the sacred power of the divine priesthood. Arriving at the holy operation of the same priesthood, we become ourselves closer to the beings [angels] that are above us by means of our assimilation, according to possibility, to their stable, indefectible, and sacred foundation, and by this means, having cast our eyes up to Jesus and the blessed Thearchy itself, and having beheld it so far as it is possible to see, and having been enlightened with the knowledge of divine visions, being both hallowed and hallowers of the mystic science, we shall be enabled to take on the form of light and become workers of divine things, both rendered and rendering perfect²⁹⁷.

To become imitators of God in his active love for creation, θεοειδής, is to realize here below, in the sensible realm, the perfection of the angelic world. Our hierarchy binds us to the one living organism that is theirs. The bishop is thus, for example, rightly called an “angel” as a sharer in the angels’ prophetic faculty and as elevated to their “revelatory likeness”²⁹⁸. The imitation of the κόσμος νοητός, of the angels’ blessed and united life, is, generally, the gift vouchsafed us in the Church.²⁹⁹ It is also the deification of the sensible realm as a whole. The angels’ beatitude is the model of our own, and of our world’s³⁰⁰. Bound together with the angels in a single life of grace, and in the person of the bishop visibly deriving our knowledge, powers, and activity from a single source, insofar as it is from him at the altar that we receive the word and the sacraments, we recognize and praise:

the beneficent and gracious source by which were shown forth our saving sacraments in order to accomplish in holy manner the sacred deification of those in process of perfection³⁰¹.

ii) *The reflection and revelation of Jesus*

This single source is typified in the bishop and at the heart of the angelic

297. “Τῷ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀνατεινομένῳ καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀνατείνοντι τῶν καλῶν ἔρωτι συμπύσσει τὰς πολλὰς ἐτερότητας καὶ εἰς ἐνοειδῆ καὶ θείαν ἀποτελειώσας ζωὴν ἔξιν τε καὶ ἐνέργειαν ἱεροπρεπῇ δωρεῖται τῆς θείας ἱερωσύνης τὴν δύναμιν, ἐξ ἧς ἐπὶ τὴν ἁγίαν ἐρχόμενοι τῆς ἱερατείας ἐνέργειαν ἐγγύτεροι μὲν αὐτοὶ γινόμεθα τῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς οὐσιῶν τῇ κατὰ δύναμιν ἀφομοιώσει τοῦ μονίμου τε καὶ ἀνεξאלλάκτου τῆς αὐτῶν ἱερᾶς ἰδρύσεως καὶ ταύτῃ πρὸς τὴν μακαρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ θεαρχικὴν αἰγὴν ἀναβλέψαντες ὅσα τε ἰδεῖν ἐφικτὸν ἐποπτεύσαντες ἱερῶς καὶ τῆς τῶν θαμάτων γνώσεως ἐλλαμφθέντες τὴν μυστικὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀφιερωμένοι καὶ ἀφιερῶνται φωτοειδεῖς καὶ θεουργικοὶ τετελεσμένοι καὶ τελεσιουργοὶ γενέσθαι δυνήσόμεθα”. *EH I.1 372B (64:4-14)*.

298. *CH XII.2 293A (43:8-11)*.

299. *CH I.3 121C (8:14-17)*.

300. *CH VIII.2 241C (35:21-25)*.

301. “... τὴν ἀγαθοεργὸν καὶ ἀγαθοδότῃν ἀρχὴν, ὑφ’ ἧς αἱ σωτηριώδεις ἡμῖν ἀνεδείχθησαν τελεταὶ τὴν ἱεράν τῶν τελουμένων θέωσιν ἱεουργοῦσαι”. *EH III.3.7 436C (87:22-24)*.

choirs. It is the “philanthropy of the thearchic goodness” that has freed us from sin and “shown us an ascent beyond the world and an inspired mode of being [πολιτεία]”³⁰². Jesus is the supreme joining and reconciliation, the supreme “symbol”. His divinity is the transcendent source of all hierarchy³⁰³, and his is the “new theandric” reality that informs our life and substance. He is:

... the fount of the divine perfumes... [which] in thearchic proportions, he distributes to the most deiform of the intellects... [and] in which the minds [=angels] joyfully delight and of which sacred perceptions they are made full³⁰⁴.

He is also the mystery of the altar realized in the bishop’s ministrations:

the source and essence and perfecting power of all our theurgic sanctifications... Jesus, our most divine altar, the thearchic consecration of the heavenly minds in whom, according to scripture, we, being consecrated and mystically consumed in sacrifice, have access [to the Father]³⁰⁵.

It is a light that streams from the sanctuary to purify, illumine, perfect, and render us “co-workers” of his divinity. Veiled in the images of our hierarchy, as once he was veiled in the flesh, he renders those veils means of participation in, and revelations of, his glory. Indeed, it is that very flesh that, we venture to say, we discover now in the form of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy: in the sacraments that render him present, and in the ranks of the faithful themselves. Our hierarchy is the “one, new man” of St. Paul, the body of Christ whose “fullness fills all in all”, the new creation. It is the gift of the Incarnation and the anticipation of the eschaton; the icon, and therefore the present reality of the world which is and is to come.

Summary: The characteristics of the Dionysian hierarchies may be summarized as follows: 1) hierarchy is the reality intended by God for the two worlds of creation, intelligible (the angels) and sensible (humans); 2) and is thus the full expression of Providence for that world, the analog of God. 3) As the icon of Providence it is necessarily an object of contemplation, because 4) it carries the γνῶσις of God and so communicates a share in his “mind”. The mind of God being love, 5) a hierarchy is therefore a community, a single corporate organism

302. *EH* III.3.11 441BC (91:22-23).

303. *DN* II.10 648CD (134:7-135:1).

304. “... πηγαῖον ὄντα τῶν θείων εὐδῶν... θεαρχικαῖς ἀναλογίαις εἰς τὰ θεοειδέστατα τῶν νοερῶν ἀναδιδόντα... ἐφ’ οἷς [ἄτμοι] οἱ νόες εὐπαθῶς ἠδόμενοι καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ἀντιλήψεων ἀποπληρούμενοι...”. *EH* IV.3.4 480A (99:10-13).

305. “... πάσης τῆς θεουργικῆς ἡμῶν ἁγιαστείας ἀρχὴ καὶ οὐσία καὶ τελεσιουργὸς δύναμις ...τὸ θεϊότατον ἡμῶν θυσιαστήριον Ἰησοῦς, ἡ θεαρχικὴ τῶν θείων νοῶν ἀφιέρωσις, ἐν ᾧ, κατὰ τὸ λόγιον, ἀφιερούμενοι καὶ μυστικῶς ὀλοκαυτόμενοι τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἔχομεν...”. *EH* IV.3.12 484D (103:3-7).

bound together by the exercise of a loving and mutual providence whose origins and enabling power come directly from God. 6) This corporate element means that the given creature, angel or human being, discovers its salvation and deification as the member of a community. The path to *ἔνωσις* lies through and within the hierarchy, not outside of it. Dionysius has no “alone to the alone”. His vision is, speaking sociologically, centripetal. There is, though, 7) a place for the individual’s enjoy-ment of union with God in Christ. This is indicated by hierarchy’s function as microcosmos.

The next to last point we understand as a rejection both of Plotinus, the lonely philosopher rising above the unfortunate – if necessary – fall into matter and flux, and of the essentially centrifugal character of the Evagrian stress on the perfected anchorite, or the representatives of Syrian “Messalianism”. Evagrius’ vision of a providential cosmos (as we shall see in Chapter VIII) has, however, been retained, as has the Syrian emphasis on the enlightened saint as “temple of God” (*ναὸς Θεοῦ*). Dionysius has also succeeded in transforming the Neoplatonists’ series of causes into a ladder of icons. This has certain important consequences. With respect, first, to the angels’ hierarchy, we note that the *CD*’s *κόσμος νοητός* is no longer causally prior to our own, sensible world. The (created) intelligible world has been cut off from the world of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, at least in the sense that the latter is no longer ontologically dependent upon the former. Our models and guides, the angels are not our creators. The implication is that, while we may grow to become “like” them in the Kingdom to come, we shall never be exactly as they are, i.e., disincarnate. The sensible world is directly dependent upon God and acquires thus a permanent validity.

Concerning our hierarchy we wish to stress two more points. First we understand the permanent nature of the sensible icon to be a clear indication of Dionysius’ Christian inspiration. An icon is, generally, a kind of incarnation. Our hierarchy, realized and revealed to us in the public worship of the Christian assembly, is the icon of God here below. It is thus the present reality of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. The union of visible with invisible, of matter with spirit, of creature with Creator, that we outlined in the preceding chapter as fundamental to Dionysius’ vision of the creature and its destiny, achieves its culmination in the Incarnation, whence is derived the possibility for, the enlightening power of, and the ultimate reality to be discovered within, all icons or symbols, all unions. Our hierarchy represents, i.e., makes present, the abiding and active reality of the incarnate Christ. Jesus is the “place of meeting” and face of Providence disclosed to “true lovers of sanctity” within the veils of the Church. The latter is the flesh he has assumed, and its glory awaits the open revelation of the eschaton³⁰⁶. He is the truth of our world. Indeed, he is our true world.

Secondly, the Areopagite’s Church is therefore not a thing, not an institution

306. See *DN* 1.4 especially and as well *EH* VII.1 ff on the general resurrection, together with our article, “On the Other Hand”.

– whether teaching body or state. It is instead the continuation of the Incarnation. We repeat: it is the icon of God. Thus, before all else, it is an object of contemplation: divine grace is rendered visible in oil and water, bread and wine, order, gesture, and spoken word. While still in a sense incomplete, not yet perfectly achieved, it remains our single reality, the meaning of our universe and the latter's unique hope – and assurance – of stability and final salvation. Outside of it there is nothing save error, darkness, and final loss.

Whence comes the darkness and its threat? How is the person of Jesus truly of a piece with the system of the CD? How, finally, is it that our hierarchy is also the icon of the individual, human soul, the macrocosmos reflecting the microcosmos? Each of these questions requires further elaboration. We maintain that the Fall is not an idle element in the Arcopagite's vision. We also hold that Jesus is not simply a name to which our author has attached certain "meta-physical" functions. He is rather, for Dionysius as for the NT, the answer given to fallen humanity. He, in his Church, is also the personal reality of every believer. For discussion of these questions, we turn to the next Chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE MYSTERY AND THE MYSTERIES: CHRIST AND THE SACRAMENTS AS REVELATION AND COMMUNICATION OF TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN

Introduction: Apart from its opening chapter, the *EH* begins and ends with death. Chapter II deals with the catechumen's participation in Christ's death through Baptism while Chapter VII presents us with a meditation on Christian burial. It is also correct, and perhaps more to Dionysius' point, to speak of two births. Baptism is the divine birth (θεία γέννησις) which marks the beginning of Christian existence, the ground of our being in, and growth into, the truly existing¹. Death and burial, on the other hand, signify for the Christian simply the end of earthly struggles. Toward that end the believer goes in hope of the resurrection of the "members of Christ"². The latter is the fulfillment of Baptism's "divine birth", "the sacred re-birth [παλιγγενεσία]"³ of the general resurrection. Linking the two deaths, the bond of the double birth, we find the journey or way (ὁδοποιήσις) of our hierarchy⁴.

The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is our context, our world, the place of our strivings and the milieu of our encounter with Christ and, through him, with the angels and finally the divine δυνάμεις. Nothing of any validity or truth may be accomplished outside of our hierarchy. It is by way of illustrating this that we shall touch on the Fall and the Incarnation before going on to trace the course of the ascent beginning in Baptism and realized, in accordance with the various ranks of the hierarchy, in the sacraments of the Eucharist and consecration of the Chrism.

Our hierarchy realizes and reveals the reality of all and is also the icon of each. Every stage of sanctified human knowing – and unknowing – is present, and represented, in the icon of the Church at worship. Here is the key both to the unity of the *CD* and to the Christian inspiration of the Dionysian vision as a whole. If the macrocosm of the Church is truly reflected in the microcosm of the redeemed human soul, then the difficulties indicated by Hornus and stressed by Vanneste regarding the *CD*'s unity, especially the problem of the *MT*'s relation to

1. *EH* II.1 392B (69:7 and 14).

2. *EH* VII.1.1 552D-553B (120:13-121:9, esp. 121:1-7).

3. *EH* VII.1.3 556B (122:15).

4. *EH* II.1 392A (69:2).

the hierarchies⁵, are largely resolved. What Hornus terms the “exteriorization of grace” in the hierarchies and the “interiorization of God” in Dionysius’ passages dealing with the mystical union⁶, i.e., in the *MT* and *DN*, are not to be separated. Both are held within the single icon of our hierarchy – although, admittedly, not without occasional confusion or ambiguity⁷. If, secondly, the unity of soul and world are discovered in the Church, this means in turn that the unity of all discovers itself in Christ. Jesus is neither a “cipher”⁸ nor is the deification wrought by and for us in his Church other than the result of his Incarnation⁹. The *CD* is centered in the *EH*, at the altar, and thus in Christ.

We begin this chapter with a discussion of our first point above, specifically: the place of the *MT*, i.e., the mystic ascent, as within the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. Dionysius’ use of Moses’ ascent of Sinai shall be the basis for this chapter’s prologue.

A. SINAI: THE IMAGE OF THE ASCENT AND TYPE OF THE CHURCH

In the first chapter of the *MT* we find the following account:

... the divine Moses is bidden first of all to be purified himself, and then to separate himself from such as have not undergone it, and, after every purification, he hears the many-voiced trumpets, he beholds many lights lightening with pure and many-streaming rays. Then, when he has separated from the many, with the chosen priests, he attains to the summit of the divine ascents. And yet in these he still meets not with God, for he sees not him – since he is not to be seen – but the place where he dwells. And this I believe to mean the highest and most divine of the things which are beheld and intuited, and certain basic λόγος of the things subordinate to him who transcends all things, through which is shown his presence which is beyond every notion and transcends the spiritual summits of his most holy places. And then, abandoning both the things beheld and those beholding them, he enters into the truly secret darkness of unknowing, according to which he renounces all perceptions open to knowledge and comes to have his being in him who is altogether untouchable and invisible and beyond all things, and, belonging to nothing else, whether to himself or to another, he is united according to the greater [faculty] by the cessation of all knowledge to him who is wholly unknowable, and, through knowing not at all, knows in a manner beyond mind¹⁰.

5. See our Introduction above, 28-29 and 31-32.

6. “Reflections”, 56.

7. See above, Chapter III, 134 and below, 213-214.

8. Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 125. For the same opinion of Jesus Christ in the *CD* see also P. Rorem, “The Uplifting Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius”, 144, and Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 75-84.

9. *Ibid.* 71.

10. “Ὁ θεῖος Μωϋσῆς ἀποκαθαρθῆναι πρῶτον αὐτὸς κελεύεται, καὶ αὐτὸς τῶν μὴ τοι-

According to Vanneste the Moses-Sinai typology as well as other “specifically religious elements”, such as the invocation of the Trinity opening the treatise, are without any real significance¹¹. Moses serves to introduce the logically rigorous system of negations¹², and the whole passage takes place on the plane of the abstract: “This biblical image taken from Exodus is only a verbal expression of God’s transcendent unknowability”¹³. It would in fact scarcely appear to be pushing matters too far to see in Dionysius’ use of the already traditional image a deliberate deception, the biblical passage, together with “le manteau du pseudonymat”, serving to introduce in disguise “une merveilleuse métaphysique de Premier Principe, qui plonge ses racines dans le néoplatonisme”¹⁴.

We maintain that Vanneste is able to discuss the figure of Moses as inconsequential solely because he has previously declared that the *MT* (and *DN*) are unrelated to the treatises on the hierarchies. The “retour cosmique” of the latter¹⁵ bears no relation to the former’s “démarche d’une psychologie individuelle et autonome”¹⁶. “Theurgy” and “theology” are entirely separate spheres¹⁷, and Vanneste thus frees himself to consider *MT* and *DN* by themselves¹⁸. It is a mistaken freedom, the first error being, generally, the sharp separation between individual and cosmos, and the second the specific failure to recognize in the use of the Sinai motif more than simply the casual – or even dishonest – reference to a traditional image. If there is indeed a connection between the *MT* and the hierarchies, if Dionysius’ mysticism proceeds “from the vision of the world and the Church that he draws from Scripture and the Liturgy”¹⁹, then his use of Moses and the ascent of Sinai cannot be fortuitous or merely glib. There must be a discernible relationship between Moses, Exodus, and our hierarchy.

οὕτων ἀφορισθῆναι καὶ μετὰ πᾶσαν ἀποκάθαρσιν ἀκούει τῶν πολυφώνων σαλπίγγων καὶ ὀρχᾶ φῶτα πολλὰ καθαρὰς ἀπαστράπτοντα καὶ πολυχύτους ἀκτῖνας· εἴτα τῶν πολλῶν ἀφώρισθαι καὶ μετὰ τῶν ἐκκρίτων ἱερέων ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκρότητα τῶν θείων ἀναβάσεων φθάνει. Κἄν τοῦτοις αὐτῷ μὲν οὐ συγγίνεται τῷ θεῷ, θεωρεῖ δὲ οὐκ αὐτὸν (ἀθάτος γάρ), ἀλλὰ τὸν τόπον, οὗ ἔστι. Τοῦτο δὲ οἶμαι σημαίνειν τὸ τὰ θεϊότατα καὶ ἀκρότατα τῶν ὀρωμένων καὶ νοουμένων ὑποθετικούς τινας εἶναι λόγους τῶν ὑποβεβλημένων τῷ πάντα ὑπερέχοντι, δι’ ὧν ἡ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἐπίνοιαν αὐτοῦ παρουσία δείκνυται ταῖς νοηταῖς ἀκρότησι τῶν ἀγιωτάτων αὐτοῦ τόπων ἐπιβατεύουσα) καὶ τότε καὶ αὐτῶν ἀπολύεται τῶν ὀρωμένων καὶ τῶν ὀρώντων καὶ εἰς τὸν γνόφον τῆς ἀγνωσίας εἰσδύνει τὸν ὄντως μυστικόν, καθ’ ὃν ἀπομύει πάσας τὰς γνωστικὰς ἀντιλήψεις, καὶ ἐν τῷ πᾶμπαν ἀναφεῖ καὶ ἀοράτῳ γίγνεται, πᾶς ὧν τοῦ πάντων ἐπέκεινα καὶ οὐδενός, οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε ἐτέρου, τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγνώστῳ τῇ πάσης γνώσεως ἀνενεργησία κατὰ τὸ κρεῖττον ἐνούμενος καὶ τῷ μηδὲν γινώσκειν ὑπὲρ νοῦν γινώσκων”. *MT* I.3 1000C-1001A (143:18-144:15).

11. “Théologie Mystique”, 405.

12. “Doctrine des trois voies”, 465.

13. “Genuine”, 301-302.

14. *Mystère*, 182.

15. “Théologie Mystique”, 409-410.

16. *Mystère*, 27.

17. “Genuine”, 302, and “Théologie Mystique”, 409.

18. *Mystère*, 34-35.

19. See Roques, “Note sur Theologia” *RAM* (1949) 212.

We submit that there is strong evidence for such a connection, however unremarked that linkage has been in modern scholarship to date²⁰. It appears in the text itself of Exodus. The *MT* passage is based on Exod 19:16-20; 20:18; 24:9-12; 33:9ff; and 34:29-35. Of these, Dionysius draws primarily from Chapters 19 and 24. We cite both in full from the LXX, beginning with 19:16ff:

[the people are purified and warned not to touch the Mountain]... it came to pass on the third day, when they had drawn near the Mountain, that there were voices and lightnings and a dark cloud on Mount Sinai, and the voice of the trumpet rang mightily, and all the people were frightened in the camp. And Moses led the people out of the camp to the meeting with God, and they were present beneath the Mount... and all the people were exceedingly amazed. And the voices of the trumpets, approaching, grew greatly louder. Moses was speaking and God was answering him with his voice. And the Lord descended on the Mountain, on the peak of Mount Sinai; and the Lord called Moses up to the peak of the Mountain and Moses went up.

Let us note the sequence of actions. The people have purified themselves. They are warned not to touch the holy mountain. They are led up to its foot where they see and hear sights and sounds that they cannot fully comprehend, but which Moses does. God comes down upon the peak in a cloud and calls his chosen one, Moses, who ascends alone into the darkness of the holy place. We continue with Exod 24:9ff:

And Moses ascended with Aaron and Nadab and Abbioud and seventy of the elders of Israel. And there they saw the place [τόπος] where the God of Israel was standing; and the area beneath his feet was, as it were, a work of sapphire brick, in purity as the form of the firmament of Heaven... and the Lord said to Moses; 'Come up to me in the Mountain... .' [vv. 15-16:] And Moses went up to the Mountain, and the cloud hid the Mountain. And the glory of God came down upon [it]... and the cloud hid it.

Here we find a new element, the chosen few, the elders (πρεσβύτεροι) of Israel who are allowed access to a certain vision of the holy place, the τόπος where God is, but are not invited to go where Moses goes alone, the peak hidden by the cloud. Of other texts we should also note Exod 20:18-21 where once more the people are given to hear and see the "voice", the "trumpet", and the "lamps" while remaining "afar off" from the peak that Moses ascends alone. Again, we

20. P. Rorem has, subsequent to the original draft of this thesis, noted the connections between the figures of Moses in the *MT* and the Dionysian hierarch. See, for example, *Symbols*, 140-142, as well as his article, "Moses as the Paradigm for the Liturgical Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius" *SP* 18,2 (1989) 275-279.

have Exod 33:9ff where the column of cloud rests by Moses' tent while God speaks with him and the people worship from outside. Later in the same chapter (vv. 18-23) we find Moses' vision of God: he is given to see the "back of God", "for my face shall no man see and live". Finally, we point to Exod 34:29-35 where Moses descends from the heights with "veiled" face to shield the people from the radiance of his countenance, still bright from his proximity to God.

Where is the connection with the hierarchies? The texts' image of a people purified and rendered witnesses to a theophany clothed with the lights, trumpets, voices, smoke, and cloud of the descent upon Sinai, a theophany whose deepest meanings remain yet veiled for them, a people both chosen and gathered about the frontiers of a holy place yet not granted complete entrance within it – such an image must certainly recall to the reader's mind (and how much more so to a Dionysius) the description of the baptized, i.e., purified and illumined laity, we encountered in the last chapter. There, too, we found a chosen and purified people, the Christian λαός, accorded a certain vision of divine things by virtue of their purification yet still standing outside the gates of the holy places, the altar, "peeking at the divine symbols"²¹, the "sensible perfumes", "material lights", and audible "discussions of the sacred teachings"²² that have been granted them. We discover in the few who are given access into the holy place, the presbyters of Israel, an unmistakable parallel to the orders of the clergy, particularly the priests, gathered about the altar and the hierarch as the Seraphim round God²³, who "behold and hear the divine things clearly revealed to them"²⁴. In Moses, of course, we see the hierarch, "the inspired and divine man instructed in every sacred knowledge in whom... his own hierarchy is accomplished and made known"²⁵. The references to the "cloud", the "place" of God, and the "firmament" might recall both the altar itself and, particularly, the choirs of angels who are at once the "places where rests the Thearchy"²⁶ and the "holy minds who... are filled full of the secret light... [and] who deliver it to us"²⁷. The nature of Moses' vision, obscured in the darkness, of God's "back" may very likely (although there is no explicit reference to it in the *CD*) have suggested to Dionysius the union with God that is accomplished in and through the *δυνάμεις* while leaving the essence hidden²⁸. In the prophet's descent with radiant though veiled face, again not referred to explicitly by Dionysius, we are reminded of the delivery of sacred things by "the inspired hierarchs in intuitions not obvious to the commonality of

21. *EH* III.2 428A (81:10-11).

22. *CH* I.3 121C-124A (8:21-9:7).

23. *EH* IV.3.6 480D (100:8-12).

24. *Ep.* VIII.1 1089A (177:4-5).

25. *EH* I.3 373C (66:5-6).

26. *CH* VII.4 212C (32:7-8); see also VII.2 208A (28:20-21).

27. *CH* XV.6 336A (58:8-9); see also Gandillac, 182, note 1.

28. For Exod 33:18-23 and the essence/energies distinction in patristic thought, see A. de Halleux, "Palamisme et Tradition" *Ir* xlviii (1978) 484.

the faithful, but... rather in sacred symbols" veiled to the majority²⁹.

The texts of Exodus to which Dionysius alludes in the *MT* account of Moses and Sinai provide us with nothing less than a sketch of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. All participation in sacred knowing, and "unknowing", every union with the divine that we may be given to experience here below, all is to be understood as realized within the context of our hierarchy. Recalling the passages from Exodus and their parallels, this in turn means specifically within the frame of the Church's worship. Sinai is a type of the Church within whose liturgy the mystical union here-below is signified and accomplished³⁰.

Our worship is also both the icon of the soul's union with God, and that which uniquely enables the union. Of this union Roques writes that "il doit être rare et bref... n'est accessible qu'à une catégorie de chrétiens privilégiée et particulièrement sainte"³¹. Here-below, short of the eschaton, it must constitute "un sommet privilégié, un éclair, un instant"³². The category of "privileged and particularly holy" believers and the "privileged summit" appear to us to refer to – as typified in – the person and office of the hierarch. Moses is identified with the office at least twice. In *EHV* we hear of "those who were sacredly initiated as to that sacred tabernacle [of the OT] by Moses, the first and chief [ἡγεμῶ00ν] of the hierarchs according to the Law"³³. Again in the same chapter, in a passage discussing the sacrament of ordination and worth quoting at length, we find parallels between our bishops and both Moses and Christ:

Declaring the mystery, the hierarch cries aloud the sacred proclamations of the consecrations and those consecrated, in as much as the God-loving initiator into sacred things is declarer of divine election, himself leading the ordinands to priestly consecration not by his own grace, but moved by God to every hierarchic sanctifications. Thus Moses, the initiator into the sacred things of the Law, neither brought his brother, Aaron, to priestly consecration nor deemed him even a lover of God or of a priestly nature until he was moved to this by God – by God the source of all consecration – and accomplished in sacred manner the priestly consecration. And indeed our own first and thearchic initiator into sacred things – for Jesus, the lover of mankind, became even this for our sakes – glorified not himself... wherefore he also thus led the disciples to priestly consecration [calling on

29. *EH* 1.4 376C (67:12-14).

30. The texts from Exodus, esp. chapters 19 and 24, are themselves surely connected to and reflect the later worship of Israel at the Temple in Jerusalem. The trumpets recall the shofar and the thick, dark cloud hiding the glory, the darkness within the holy of holies, the place of the *kabod* (cf. e.g. I Kgs 8). See M. Noth, *Exodus, a Commentary* (Philadelphia: 1962) 11-17, and R. Clement, *The Temple* (Philadelphia: 1965) 17-27 and 100-122.

31. *L'Univers*, 328.

32. Roques, "Note sur Theologia", 211. On the importance of the "instant" or "sudden" for Dionysius, see our discussion of *Ep. III* and the ἐξαίφνης at the end of this chapter.

33. *EHV* 1.2 501C (105:11-12).

the Spirit to act, a citation of Acts 1:4ff]³⁴.

There are three other texts besides *MTI* which treat of the mystical vision or union with God, “l’état théopathétique”. The first is the vision of Isaiah in *Isa* 6:1ff. This takes up the whole of *CH XIII* and seeks to explain the manner whereby the prophet “learned... that the divine is incomparably established above every visible and invisible power”³⁵ – i.e., precisely above every negation and affirmation³⁶, the vision of Moses. The second text, from the *DN*, describes the vision of Dionysius’ master, Hierotheos:

When, as you [Timothy] know, we and he [Hierotheos] and many of our holy brothers came together for the sight of the life-originating and God-bearing body, both James... and Peter... were there, too. And, after we had seen, it seemed good to us for all the hierarchs to hymn the infinite virtue and goodness of the thearchic weakness as each one was able. It was he [Hierotheos] who, second only to the theologians [Apostles] themselves, prevailed over all the other holy initiates, being wholly transported, wholly taken out of himself, suffering communion with the things hymned [in such fashion] that all who heard and saw him, who know him – or, rather, knew him not judged him to be rapt of God³⁷.

The third vision is that of Carpus, bishop in Crete, whose tradition it was never to celebrate the liturgy without first having experienced a vision³⁸, and who also was provided a vision of Christ “suddenly” during his midnight prayers³⁹.

34. Τὴν ἱερὰν δὲ τῶν τελειώσεων καὶ τῶν τελουμένων ἀνάρρησιν ὁ ἱεράρχης ἀναβοᾷ, τοῦ μυστηρίου δηλοῦντος, ὡς ὁ φιλόθεος ἱεροτελεστής ἐκφαντορικός ἐστι τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἐκλογῆς οὐκ αὐτὸς ἰδίᾳ χάριτι τοὺς τελουμένους ἐπὶ τὴν ἱερατικὴν ἄγων τελείωσιν, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ θεοῦ κινούμενος εἰς πάσας τὰς ἱεραρχικὰς ἀγιαστέας. Οὕτω Μωσῆς ὁ νομικός ἱεροτελεστής, οὐδὲ ἀδελφὸν ὄντα τὸν Ἀαρὼν εἰς ἱερατικὴν τελείωσιν ἄγει καὶ φιλόθεον αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ ἱερατικὸν οἰόμενος, ἄχρις οὗ θεόθεν εἰς τοῦτο κινήθεις, ὑπὸ τελετάρχῃ θεῷ, τὴν ἱερατικὴν τελείωσιν ἱεραρχικῶς ἐτελεσιουργήσεν. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ θεαρχικός ἡμῶν καὶ πρῶτος ἱεροτελεστής (ἐγεγόνει γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο δι’ ἡμᾶς ὁ φιλανθρωπότατος Ἰησοῦς) οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν... Διὸ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπὶ τὴν ἱερατικὴν τελείωσιν ἄγων τοὺς μαθητάς...”. *EH V.3.5* 512BC (111:26-112:12).

35. *CH XIII.4* 304C (47:4-5).

36. Gandillac, 157-157, note 1.

37. “... Ἦνίκα καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὡς οἴσθα, καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἱερῶν ἡμῶν ἀδελφῶν ἐπὶ τὴν θέαν τοῦ ζωαρχικοῦ καὶ θεοδόχου σώματος συνεληλύθαμεν, παρῆν δὲ καὶ... Ἰάκωβος καὶ Πέτρος... εἶτα ἐδόκει μετὰ τὴν θέαν ὑμῆσαι τοὺς ἱεράρχας ἅπαντας, ὡς ἕκαστος ἦν ἱκανός, τὴν ἀπειροδύναμον ἀγαθότητα τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀσθενείας, πάντων ἐκράτει μετὰ τοὺς θεολόγους... τῶν ἄλλων ἱερομυστῶν ὅλος ἐκδημῶν, ὅλος ἐξιστάμενος ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ ὑμνούμενα κοινωνίαν πάσχων καὶ πρὸς πάντων, ὧν ἠκούετο καὶ ἑωρᾶτο καὶ ἐγινώσκετο καὶ οὐκ ἐγινώσκετο, θεόληπτος εἶναι καὶ θεῖος ὑμολόγος κρινόμενος”. *DN III.2* 681C-684A (141:5-14).

38. *Ep. VIII.6* 1097BC (188:11-14).

39. *Ibid.* 1100AF (190:5ff). Rorem, *Symbols*, and Louth, *Denys*, mention Moses, Hierotheos, and Carpus, though not Isaiah.

Besides the fact that these visions deal with “hierarchs” and concern the same rare experience of God’s transcendence, they also have a common context in public worship. They take place within (or as with Carpus, just before) a “cultic” setting, be the latter that of the OT or of the NT Church. Isaiah is granted a vision of God upon the throne of glory within the Temple of Jerusalem (Isa 6:1-4), just as it is within the Temple that the prophet receives his purification and his ministry (vv. 5-9). Similarly, whether in reference to the Dormition of the Virgin Mary⁴⁰, or, as one scholar would have it, originally to the Eucharist itself⁴¹, it is clear that Hierotheos’ vision takes place within the Church’s worship⁴². Carpus’ visions take place before the celebration of the Eucharist, but in preparation for it. The Church at prayer is the reality of Sinai. It both typifies the individual soul’s union with God – a point to which we return below – and itself constitutes the milieu within which that union is made possible⁴³. One cannot find in the *CD* any encounter with God that is outside the general frame of the σύμβολον given in our “hierarchy”, the meeting place of heaven and earth.

A second point concerns the ὑποθετικοί λόγοι that Moses contemplates, the τόπος θεοῦ. Following Lossky⁴⁴, we identify these λόγοι with the divine reasons or wills underlying creation. Furthermore, we understand them as identical to the “holy principles [ἀρχαὶ] of things accomplished”⁴⁵ on and around the Church’s altar. Recalling our discussion on λόγος/ἀναλογία, in the preceding chapters, we are brought again to the fact that for Dionysius the true contemplation, the real φυσική θεωρία, consists of the contemplation and science of hierarchy. In our case, this must refer to the Scripture and, yet more clearly, to the rites of the Church. It is through this contemplation that we arrive at the intuition of the angelic hierarchies, the “places” or “forecourts” of God, and finally of the uncreated δυνάμεις that irradiate all creation in order to bring the creature to a share in the Creator. This process finds its fulfillment in the “philanthropy” of Jesus.

Stiglmayr is certainly correct in seeing the Areopagite’s mysticism as “on the whole... of a sacral character”⁴⁶. The mystery of divine love revealed in Christ, the revelation of the single “ray” upholding and penetrating the worlds of humans and angels, is discerned in the forms of the liturgy established by Scripture and adapted to the several capacities of each⁴⁷. The whole mystery is also discovered in each sacred action, in each “mystery” of the Church, although the action may

40. See the Scholiast, *PG IV* 236C, and Pachymeres’ commentary, *PG III* 689C.

41. See the article by George Every, “Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite” *One Yet Two* (1976) 85ff.

42. See again the Scholiast, *PG IV* 257BC, and Pachymeres, *PG III* 689D-692A.

43. See Roques, *L’Univers*, 328.

44. “Théologie Mystique”, 218; see also von Semmelroth, “Συμβολική θεολογία”, 3.

45. *EH III.2* 428A (81:12).

46. “Ascese und Mystik des sog. Dionysius Areopagita” *Schol 2* (1927) 206.

47. See the article by Sheldon-Williams, “The Holy Hierotheos” *SP viii* (1966) esp. 115.

be differently received in so far as each believer's ability (ἀναλογία) or degree of advancement in sacred truth also differs. This principle is spelled out in the following passage concerning the sacrament of the chrism:

Neither is the visible consecration of the myron invisible or not communicated to those about the hierarch [the clergy] but... penetrates also unto them, establishing [them in] the contemplation which is beyond the many, sacredly veiled by them and separated in hierarchic manner from the multitude. For the ray of the all-holy things shines purely and immediately upon the inspired men, as on ones who are akin to the spiritual, perfuming in unveiled manner their spiritual perceptions. It does not, however, proceed in a similar manner to the subordinates [i.e., laity], but by them [the clergy], as secret contemplations of the spiritual... it is veiled under winged enigmas, through which sacred enigmas the well-ordered ranks of the subordinates are led up to the sacred measure proper to them⁴⁸.

Again in Chapter V, we find the same multivalent nature of the symbols encountered in our hierarchy. Here the reference is to Scripture as read or sung within the context of liturgical action:

The scriptural hymns and readings... hatch the imperfect into life-bearing adoption to sonship, effecting the conversion of those who are accursedly poisoned, removing the hostile enchantment and terror... and giving them to understand in appropriate manner the summit of the deiform condition and power according to which they instead terrify the opposing powers [the demons] and arrive at the healing of others, not only possessing the activity of the theomimetic immobility with regard to the hostile terrors, but bestowing it as well; and, for those who have already passed over from worse things to a holy mind, they [Scriptures] instill a holy state of being... they perfectly purify those still in need of becoming altogether pure; and they lead the holy to the divine icons and to both contemplation of and communion in them; finally, they give feast to the completely holy ones, through blessed and spiritual visions filling full their likeness to the One and making them one⁴⁹.

48. "Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ φαινομένη τοῦ μύρου τελεσιουργία τοῖς περὶ τὸν ἱεράρχην ἐστὶν ἀκοινωνήτος ἢ ἀθέατος, ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον ἄχρις αὐτῶν διήκουσα καὶ ἰστώσα τὴν ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς θεωρίαν ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἱερῶς περικαλύπτεται καὶ τῆς πληθύος ἱεραρχικῶς ἀποδιαπτέλλεται. Τοῖς γὰρ ἐνθέοις ἀνδράσιν ἡ τῶν πανιέρων ἀκτίς ὡς συγγενέσι τοῦ νοητοῦ φωτὸς καθαρῶς καὶ ἀμέσως ἐλλάμπουσα καὶ τὰς νοερὰς αὐτῶν ἀντιλήψεις ἀπερικαλύπτως εὐωδιάζουσα πρὸς τὸ ὑφείμενον οὐκέτι ὁμοίως πρόεισιν, ἀλλ' ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὡς κρυφίων τοῦ νοητοῦ θεωρῶν ἀνεκπομπεύτως εἰς τὸ τοῖς ἀνομοίοις ἄχραντον ὑπὸ πτερωτοῖς αἰνίγμασι συγκαλύπτεται, δι' ὧν ἱερῶν αἰνιγμάτων αἱ τῶν ὑποβεβηκότων εὐκοσμοὶ τάξεις ἀνάγονται πρὸς τὴν κατ' αὐτὰς ἱερὰν ἀναλογίαν". *EH* IV.3.2 476BC (97:8-18).

49. "Ἐπίσης δὲ πάλιν αἱ τῶν λογίων ᾠδαὶ καὶ ἀναγνώσεις, τοὺς μὲν ἀτελέστους μαγεύονται πρὸς ζωηφόρον υἰοθεσίαν, ἐπιστροφὴν δὲ ἱερὰν ποιοῦνται τῶν ἐναγῶς ἐνεργου-

Acting at once on many levels, their depths revealed to and deifying the few who are capable of and open to further ascent, veiled yet still edifying to the many, in all respects and in every instance realizing divine Providence in the world, the rites and sacred texts of our hierarchy present themselves as an ordered ascent from ignorance and sin into the knowledge of, participation in, and union with God.

The “singleness” of the ascent leads us to a final consideration of Moses’ ascent in the *MT*. We discover in the ἀνάβασις of Sinai the type of the individual’s ἀναγωγή that our hierarchy both embraces, as our God-given context or world, and reveals as the icon of the perfected human being. Moses first purifies himself and then separates himself from the impure. Secondly, he hears and sees the heavenly voices and lights. He experiences illumination in the vision of the λόγοι underlying creation. Finally, completing the triad, he is taken wholly outside of himself by means of that movement and gift of union with the divine energies with which we dealt in discussing the creature’s ἔνωσις, the latter being the deification that is the goal of all hierarchy⁵⁰. Every stage of the individual believer’s ascent to God is both typified in, and enabled by, the hierarchy. The “mountain of God” is the Church itself, the “meeting place” of heaven and earth whose ascents, from ignorance to knowledge, from sin to perfection, from separation to union, are the allotted task and sanctifying grace respectively demanded of and bestowed upon every Christian believer.

Summary: Against Vanneste we assert that Dionysius’ *Mystical Theology* belongs as much to our hierarchy as the analyses of the sacraments. We hear the words of Scripture and, simultaneously confronted with the moving imagery of the rites, are called upon to cooperate with divine grace in employing at one and the same time the exercise of the symbolical, positive, and negative theologies⁵¹ in order thus to be led up to “the γνῶσις of beings as they truly are”, grow conformed to the divine, and ultimately, still within the frame of the Liturgy, be united with God. The ἀναγωγή moves from the visible world (our hierarchy) to the invisible one(the angels), from the latter to the powers of God discussed in the

μένων, ἀφαιροῦσι δὲ τὴν ἐναντίαν πτοίαν καὶ θέλξιν... τὸ τῆς θεοειδοῦς ἕξεως καὶ δυνάμεως ἀκρότατον ἀναλόγως αὐτοὺς ὑποδεικνῦσαι, καθ’ ἣν ἐκδειματώσουσι μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ τὰς ἐναντίας δυνάμεις καὶ τῆς ἐτέρων ἰατρείας προστήσονται τὸ θεομιμήτως ἀκίνητον μὲν ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων καλῶν πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἐναντίας πτοίας δραστήριον οὐκ ἔχοντες μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ δωροῦμενοι, τοῖς δὲ εἰς νοῦν ἱερὸν ἐκ τῶν χειρόνων μεταφοιτήσασιν ἕξιν ἱερὰν ἐντίθενται... τοὺς δὲ πρὸς τὸ εἶναι πανάγνους ἐνδεεῖς τελέως ἀποκαθαίρουσιν, τοὺς δὲ ἱεροὺς ἄγουσιν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας εἰκόνας καὶ ἐποψίας αὐτῶν καὶ κοινωνίας· ἐστιῶσι δὲ τοὺς πανιέροους ἐν μακαρίοις καὶ νοητοῖς θεάμασιν ἀποπληροῦσαι τὸ ἐνοειδὲς αὐτῶν τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ ἐνοποιοῦσαι”. *EH* IV.3.3 476D-477B (97:28-98:13).

50. See *EH* I.4 376B (66:20-67:6) and *CH* III.1 164D (17:3-5).

51. See the article by Roques, “Symbolisme et théologie mystique” *BAGB* I (1957) 107-108, and “Introduction” *CH* xxix.

DN, and at last to union with God (the *MT*). At no point, though, do we ever depart from our proper context, our hierarchy. Our journey is at once outward, beyond the realm of sense and finally of creation itself to God, and inward, away from exterior things to the depths of the soul and to the point therein – the “altar” – where the Creator stoops to meet his creature. At all times in this double process our center and goal remains constant. It is never other than the mystery typified and made actual at the altar of the Church. The whole of the *CD* may be summed up in the opening of the old Latin Mass: *Introibo ad altare Dei*. It is an entry that is always directed toward, and always the experience of the meeting of sensible and intelligible, created and uncreated, that was realized once for all in the Incarnation.

B. THE MYSTERY: GOD’S ECONOMY IN CHRIST

Before dealing specifically with Dionysius on the Incarnate Christ, we must first consider briefly what our author believes to be the alternative to our hierarchy. We therefore leave the precincts of the Church.

1. Outside the doors: the Fall and the Devil

The world outside is a shadow reality, fallen. We find Dionysius’ main description of the Fall given in Chapter III of the *EH*:

The life which is most full of passions and the termination of corrupting death took up human nature after the latter had senselessly fallen away in the beginning from the divine good things. For, consequent to its destructive abandonment of the truly good and the transgression in paradise of the holy ordinance... it was given over to its own inclinations and to the bewitching and hostile deceits of the adversary, to those things which are the opposite of the divine good things. Whence it wretchedly received the mortal in place of the eternal, possessing its proper origin in corruptible [i.e., mortal] generations... . Rather, indeed, falling away by its own will from the divine and untaught life, it was brought to the opposite extreme, the many-passioned alienation... being subordinated to the ruinous and evil-working multiplicities... it fell piteously into the danger of destruction and of non-existence⁵².

52. “Τὴν ἀνθρωπεῖαν φύσιν, ἀρχῇθεν ἀπὸ τῶν θείων ἀγαθῶν ἀνοήτως ἐξολισθήσασαν, ἡ πολυπαθεστάτη ζωὴ διαδέχεται, καὶ τὸ τοῦ φθοροποιοῦ θανάτου πέρας. Ἀκολουθῶν γὰρ ἡ τῆς ὄντως ἀγαθότητος ὀλέθριος ἀποστασία καὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐν παραδείσῳ θεσμοθεσίας ὑπερβασία... ταῖς θελτικαῖς τοῦ ἐναντίου καὶ δυσμενέσιν ἀπάταις, τοῖς ἐναντίοις τῶν θείων ἀγαθῶν, οἰκείαις ροπαῖς παραδέδωκεν. Ἐνθεν ἐλεεινῶς ἀντὶ μὲν αἰωνίου τὸ θνητὸν ἀντηλλάξατο, τὴν δὲ οἰκείαν ἀρχὴν ἐν φθαρτικαῖς ἐσχηκυῖα γενέσεσιν... Ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς θείας καὶ ἀναγώγου ζωῆς ἐθελουσίως ἀποπεσοῦσα πρὸς τὴν ἐναντίαν ἐσχατίαν ἠνέχθη, τὴν πολυπαθεστάτην ἀλλοίωσιν... ταῖς ὀλεθρίαῖς καὶ κακεργέτισιν ὑποταττομένη πληθύνει... εἰς ἀνυπαρξίας οἰκτρῶς ἐμπεπτῶκει καὶ ἀπωλείας κίνδυνον. *EH* III.3.11 440C-441A (90:16-91:8).

Let us note the characteristics of the Fall and of fallen existence as outlined in this passage. The Fall took place in “the beginning [ἀρχῇθεν]”. It was the result of an act of deliberate choice, of an exercise of free will (ἐθελουσίως), and a departure (ἀποστασία) from the truly good which saw as its inevitable result the handing-over of our nature to the dominion of false goods, of lies and deceit, of the rule of the Devil and to dissolution and death. At this point, let us recall our discussion in Chapter II above of the θεοειδής. The latter is the capacity in created nature for growth into, cooperation, and union with the uncreated. It is the potential for participation (μετουσία) in God’s beatitude through the channeling of our energies, our motion, into the single theandric activity of love that is at once the proper use of our natural powers and the reality of grace. In this account of the Fall we discover precisely the opposite: rather than a channelling we find a scattering of powers. “The variableness of many passions” replaces the unifying force of the “motor” of love. Rather than a dependence on the unique source of life and love, of goodness, humanity is given over to brokenness and division, to the clatter of “multiplicities” and factions both inside and outside its being, to an apostasy that ends in the last rejection one may make, that of life itself. The One, and therefore the ἐνοειδής that is given the creature to realize through participation in the One, is being and life. The alternative is the slide into a “multiplicity” that results finally in non-being.

If the last two sentences have a Neoplatonic ring, then it might be well for us to recall, in connection with the theme of “multiplicity” and its equation here with evil and unreality⁵³, the words of the Gadarene demoniac: “My name is legion, for we are many” (Mark 5:9). The Biblical passage directs us to an element of the Dionysian scheme quite lacking in the systems of the philosophers⁵⁴. Over and within the rule of the passions and their “many motions”⁵⁵, this is the force that governs in a sense that loss of balance and dissipation of the proper interior ordering of reason (λόγος), irritability (θυμός), and desire (ἐπιθυμία) in the soul⁵⁶, which is an integral part of the post-lapsarian state⁵⁷. This final and personal

53. The term πλῆθος and derivatives is used 53 times in the *CD* (see van den Daehle, *Indices*, 116) almost invariably in a negative sense; for example, ἡ δαιμόνια πλῆθος of *DN* IV.18 716A. By contrast, the terms ποιικιλία (26 times, *Indices*, 117) and ἑτερότης (10 times, *Indices*, 67), as expressive of the providentially-intended diversity of creation, carry a positive connotation. The one exception is *DN* XI.5 952D (220:18), a rebellious “otherness” which accords with the sense of “manyness” as a rejection of God and a characteristic of the demons.

54. For the Neoplatonists, evil is generally seen as an inevitable – if regrettable – concomitant of the cosmic “dance”, see *Enn.* IV.4.32-33 and 39.

55. *DN* XI.5 953A (220:22-221:2). For Dionysius’ invariably negative use of the term πάθος, see also *EH* III.3.11 441B (91:21-22); VII.1.3 556A (122:8); *DN* IV.19 717A (164:10-11); XI.5 953A (221:2); *MT* IV 1040D (148:5); and *Ep.* X 1117B (209:5-6).

56. See esp. *Ep.* VIII.3-4 1093A and C (182:6-8 and 183:11) on Demophilus, the monk whose interior hierarchy (of the soul) is not in order.

57. See particularly the “weakness [ἀσθένεια]” or “lack [ἐλλειψις]” of will and the exercise of will mentioned in *DN* IV.23 725B (171:13-16); IV.24 728A (172:16); IV.31 732B (176:11); IV.32 732D (177:10-15); and esp. IV.35 733D-736A (179:5-13).

element is, of course, the Devil, the “genius” behind all loss and division, the Adversary, the first of creation to embrace the evil as “the desire for that which is not”⁵⁸, to lust for the “seeming good”⁵⁹, and thus to father the lie. They are his “proper inclinations”, his “bewitching and destructive deceits” to which we have been given over, his rule or power (κράτος) that prevails against us⁶⁰, that drags us inevitably to death, and from which we, powerless, stand in need of redemption. Together with his angels⁶¹, the “prince of this world” is the last, and necessary, element in the Dionysian sketch of the Fall.

And that sketch is a traditional one. It is the vision of a kind of cosmic disintegration presided over by destructive powers of a “spiritual” nature. We may thus recall the phrasing of Rom 5:12. “As through one man Sin came into the world, and Death through Sin, so Sin spread to all men, on account of which [Death] all have sinned”. We insist on the traditional aspects of his scheme as against those of Dionysius’ modern critics who see in the Areopagite’s version of Original Sin and its consequences an insufficient appreciation for the “radical” change brought by the Fall and thus a dangerous dilution of the Christian Gospel of redemption. This argument is advanced with particular force by Julius Gross in his article, “Ur- und Erbsünde in Theosophie des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita”⁶² as well as in the writings of Stiglmayr⁶³, von Semmelroth⁶⁴, Brons⁶⁵, and most recently, K. P. Wesche⁶⁶. The main thrust of Gross’ argument lies in his assertion that, for Dionysius, “the soul can only be impaired... through mistaken and disordered motions. Mistaken [only because] disordered”⁶⁷. In fact, however, nothing “essential” occurred through the fall⁶⁸. Freedom of will remains and thus there is no “inseparable division”⁶⁹ between God and humanity. The divine “light” is still there to be grasped through the exercise of will and “a Savior in the Christian sense appears superfluous”⁷⁰. Baptism becomes purely a matter of forgiveness of personal sins in the adult while children are baptized solely (citing *EH* VII.3.11 568C) in order to be raised in the Christian life. Dionysius’ optimism, therefore,

58. *DN* IV.23 725C (172:10-11); also IV.34 733D (179:3-4).

59. *DN* IV.20 720C.

60. *EH* III.3.11 441B (91:15-16); see Heb 2:1.

61. The terms δαίμων and δαιμόνιος appear 18 times (*Indices*, 42). Another, and often equivalent term for the demonic is ἐναντίος, used over 50 times (*Indices*, 57). See, for example, *EH* I.3 376A (66:15-16); II.3.6 404A (77:21-22); and III.3.11 440C (90:20-21).

62. “Ur- und Erbsünde in Theosophie des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita” *ZRG* 4 (1952) 32-42.

63. “Die Lehre von den Sacramenten”, 246-303.

64. “Erlösung und Erlöser”, 321-324.

65. *Gott u.S.*, 57-77.

66. K. P. Wesche, “A Reply to Hieromonk Alexander’s ‘Reply’” *SVTQ* (1990) 326.

67. Gross, 36.

68. *Ibid.* 39-40.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.* 37.

coupled with his “starkly metaphysical system” (Gross points particularly to the frequency of “sun” and “light” imagery as betokening a kind of metaphysical determinism in the *CD*) amounts to an effective betrayal of the Christian Gospel, a blunting of the “fine edge” of Augustinian pessimism, and so a major contribution to the necessity of the Reformation⁷¹.

It is clearly with the latter two statements that we arrive at the heart of the problem. Von Semmelroth’s complaint that the “weak point” in all Greek patristic writings, “particularly characteristic in Dionysius”, lies in the lack of a strong natural/supernatural distinction⁷², sums up the difficulty. This criticism bases itself on a tradition of NT interpretation generally, in particular of Rom 5, that is neither that of our author nor indeed of the Greek (especially Alexandrian) tradition generally. It is neither our intent to comment in detail on the effects of an interpretation of the ἐφ’ ᾧ of Rom 5:12 as referring to the person of Adam rather than to death, its nearest antecedent, and the consequent vision of human nature as itself radically fallen, nor the prevailing and very different understanding of the same passage among the Greek Fathers⁷³. We do, however, believe it necessary to point to this fundamental difference between two long-established currents of interpretation within the Christian tradition in order to arrive at a just evaluation of the *CD*. Dionysius is not an Augustinian, quite so, but to fault him for not being so seems unfair. For him there is indeed no strict natural/ supernatural distinction, rather nature presupposes grace. To put the matter another way, one which relates to what we have already written concerning the nature of image and symbol, ideally, i.e., as intended by its Maker, creation should be one with revelation. That ontology is not directly transparent, as it were, to theology, is not the result of God’s will but of an alien element whose distorting and disruptive activity has broken and obscured the original transparency. It is the vision of this original “state of nature”, wherein grace was never a *superadditum* but instead a prerequisite, that Dionysius specifically understands as restored to us in our hierarchy, and in this he shares with other representatives of the Greek Christian tradition. It is unfair to say of his account of the Fall that it is purely a matter of a decision for the “manyness” of the passions rather than the unity of God⁷⁴, or that it requires for its correction simply another act of free will coupled with the aid of an exemplarism provided by the teaching and person of Christ⁷⁵.

71. *Ibid.* 42. We overlook the fact that, of course, there was no “Augustinian pessimism” in Dionysius’ theological world of discourse to be “blunted”. It is quite possible that the author of the *CD* had never even heard of the great bishop of Hippo. He had certainly never read him.

72. “Erlösung und Erlöser”, 322; see also 324.

73. For a discussion of these matters, see the articles by Romanides, “Original Sin according to St. Paul” *SVSQ* 14 (1955-56) 5-28; and Lyonnet, “Le sens de ἐφ’ ᾧ en Rom V, 12 et l’exégèse des Pères Grecs” *Biblica* 36 (1955) 436-456. See also Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (1974) 143-146. For a more complete analysis, see J. Romanides, *Τὸ Προπατορικὸν Ἀμάρτημα* (Athens: 1989 rep.).

74. Von Semmelroth, “Erlöser”, 371; see also Stiglmayr, “Die Lehre”, 302-303.

75. Von Semmelroth, 375.

This is simply to ignore that irrational power of evil, possessing its παρουσίασις first and primarily in the person of the Devil and his angels, to which Dionysius gives due credit as the effectively ruling power of the world “outside the doors”, and whose reign he sees (being here perhaps rather more in harmony with St. Paul than was St. Augustine) as effectively barring the way to a restoration of our proper and divinely willed participation in God. Salvation is not simply a matter of our choice. The Fall requires our liberation from an active, hostile, and dominating power. While this understanding of the fallen state is not, save for the passage cited at the beginning of this section, dwelt on at length by Dionysius, it remains nonetheless a fundamental component of his thought.

Let us summarize. What is it that we discover in the world “outside the doors?” We find a slavery to “principalities and powers”, whose “deceits” and “spells” hold us bound to passions and “seeming” realities – the “evil-working multiplicities” of our present world – and who thus act to prevent our attainment to any true knowledge or communion in God, and so doom us to diminution and final extinction. What is needed therefore is the revelation of a mode of being, a πολιτεία, which will at once enable us to achieve mastery over our divided inclinations so that, freed from their turbulence, we may gain a clear vision of the truly existing, gather our powers, and follow that “vector” implanted in our nature whose final resting place lies in the transcendent Creator. More than this, we require the introduction of a power superior to the ones now in authority over us, one which is able to break their domination, “loose” the claims of that death to which we have been given over, and so restore us, through the activity of its benevolent rule and universal authority, to that capacity for union with the divine which can never know its fulfillment “outside the doors”.

2. The Incarnation: the restoration of our being in Jesus and the ground of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

Dionysius’ chief account of the Incarnation comes immediately following his account of the Fall:

The infinite philanthropy of the thearchic Goodness did not abandon the Providence which it benevolently works on our behalf, but entered without sin into a true participation of everything which is ours, and being united with our lowliness... bestowed thus communion with itself upon us as upon kin... cancelling the power over us not by might, as overpowering it, but, according to the saying mystically delivered to us, by judgment and righteousness... it freed the dwelling place of the soul from most accursed passions and corrupting stains through the complete salvation of our essence which had fallen, showing us a heavenly ascent and an inspired citizenship⁷⁶.

76. “Ἡ δὲ τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀγαθότητος ἀπειροτάτη φιλανθρωπία καὶ τὴν αὐτουργὸν ἡμῶν ἀγαθοπρεπῶς οὐκ ἀπηνήνατο πρόνοιαν, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ μεθέξει τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς γενομένων πάντων ἀναμαρτήτως καὶ πρὸς τὸ ταπεινὸν ἡμῶν ἐνοποιηθεῖσα... τὴν πρὸς αὐτὴν

At the very beginning of the *EH* (I.1) Dionysius is careful to stress the unique and all-predominating person and function of Jesus, “the most divine [θεαρχικώτατος] and super-essential mind, source, and essence, and most divine power of every hierarchy, sanctification, and divine work”⁷⁷. It is Jesus who, “by means of the love both drawn up towards him and drawing us up”, frees us from the powers to which we were subject, gathers together our brokenness, accomplishes perfection in us, grants us imitation of the angels through the exercise of the priesthood, gives the vision of himself and of the Thearchy, and who renders us finally sharers in the knowledge of divine things and makes us both “consecrated and consecrators, in the form of light and workers of divine things, perfected and workers of perfection”⁷⁸. It is in the person of Jesus, then, that we discover the answer to those needs just outlined: the introduction into our world of a power superior to the “principalities” of “this world” and able to restore us to communion with ourselves, with the angels, and so finally with God. In Jesus we discover our “approach” or “access [προσγωγή]” to God⁷⁹.

Why and how Jesus? We return to the passage opening this section. The same “infinite philanthropy” of God that made us has itself entered into the marrow and sinews of our being. The gift of communion with God, and thus the “cancellation” of that power that had assumed command over us through the Fall, can only have come about through the fact that Jesus is, himself, God. Dionysius, as Roques notes⁸⁰, makes no distinction between Jesus and the Word.

For the one and simple and secret [divinity] of Jesus, the most divine Word, through becoming man for our sakes, by means of goodness and philanthropy proceeded without change to the composite and visible... [thus] having united in the highest degree the lowly things proper to our mode of being to his divine ones... we are framed accurately together with him [recall Colossians] as members to a body⁸¹.

While the problem of Dionysius’ precise relation to, or perhaps better,

ἡμῖν κοινωνίαν ὡς ὁμογενέσι λοιπὸν ἔδωρήσατο... τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν καταλύσασα κράτος οὐ κατὰ δύναμιν ὡς ὑπερισχύουσα, κατὰ τὸ μυστικῶς ἡμῖν παραδοθὲν λόγιον ἐν κρίσει καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ... τὸ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς οἰκητήριον ἐν παντελεῖ σωτηρίᾳ τῆς ὅσον οὕτω καταπεσοῦσης ἡμῶν οὐσίας ἐναγεστώτων παθῶν καὶ φθοροποιῶν μολυσμῶν ἡλευθέρωσεν, ἀναγωγὴν ἡμῖν ὑπερκόσμιον ὑποδείξασα καὶ πολιτείαν ἐνθεον...”. *EH* III.3.11 441A-441C (91:8-23); see in the NT, Heb 4:15.

77. *EH* I.1 372A (63:12-64.2).

78. *Ibid.* 372B (64:13-14).

79. *EH* IV.3.12 484D (103:7); see also *CH* I.1 121A (7:11).

80. *L’Univers*, 320.

81. “Τὸ γὰρ ἐν καὶ ἀπλοῦν καὶ κρύφιον Ἰησοῦ τοῦ θεαρχικωτάτου λόγου τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐνανθρωπήσει πρὸς τὸ σύνθετόν τε καὶ ὁρατὸν ἀναλλοιώτως ἀγαθότητι καὶ φιλανθρωπία προελήλυθε... τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ταπεινὰ τοῖς θεοτάτοις αὐτοῦ κατ’ ἄκρην ἐνώσας... ἡμεῖς ὡς μέλη σώματι συναρμολογηθῶμεν αὐτῷ”. *EH* III.3.12 444AB (92:21-93:3).

deliberate avoidance of the Christological debates of the late fifth century⁸² does not lie within the scope of our essay, we note in passing the appearance in this passage of both the Severian term, σύνθετος, and of two of the four negative adverbs qualifying the Chalcedonian definition of the hypostatic union, ἀναλλοιότως and later on ἀσυγχύτως⁸³. These indicate what we take to be Dionysius' consistent effort to steer clear of the impassioned arguments troubling the Church of his era⁸⁴. The "negative" approach to the mystery of the Incarnation is his preferred approach, in as much as that mystery is both "ineffable with regard to all discourse and unknowable to any intelligence, even to the first of the angels", and, as he goes on to declare, "we have received his taking-on the essence of a man in a mystical way... and of the other things, as many as refer to the supernatural physiology of Jesus, we are ignorant"⁸⁵. We are, though, missing the treatises in which Dionysius tells us he deals at greater length with the Incarnation. In the case of the passage just cited he refers us to the *Theological Elements*, and elsewhere to the *Outlines of Divinity*⁸⁶.

What does remain clear, however, is his insistence that "Jesus, who is above all things, has been joined to everything human"⁸⁷, to the degree, indeed, that

the super-essential cause of the heavenly beings... does not transgress the human good order which he has himself chosen and ordained, but rather obediently submits himself to it",

i.e., here to the superior ministry of the angels⁸⁸. "The divinity [θεότης] of Jesus" is unquestionable, the "cause of all"⁸⁹, and yet he who is "beyond essence became essence"⁹⁰:

82. For a discussion of the problem, see Roques, *L'Univers*, 315-317.

83. *EH* III.3.12 444A for σύνθετος and ἀναλλοιότως (92:23), and 3.13 444C (93:16) for ἀσυγχύτως.

84. The degree to which he succeeded may be noted in the fact that both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians laid claim to him; see Stiglmayr, "Das Aufkommen", 39-63. Recently, however, in his study *Das Sacrament der Myron-Weihe in der Schrift de Eccl. Hier. des Ps.-Dionysios Areopagita in syrischen Übersetzungen und Kommentaren* (1978), Werner Strothmann has argued for Dionysius as a Syrian Monophysite on the basis of our author's insistence on the importance of the sacrament of the Chrism. The latter was, according to Strothmann, a rite that was considerably stressed by Monophysite circles as being both of Apostolic origins (hence, perhaps, Dionysius' pseudonym) and an avowal of Jesus' divinity; see esp. xliii-xlvi and lvi-lx.

85. *DN* II.9 648A (133:5-12).

86. For example, *DN* XI.5 953AB (221:10-12).

87. *Ep.* IV 1072A (160:3-4).

88. "Ἰησοῦς ἡ τῶν ὑπερουρανίων οὐσιῶν ὑπερούσιος αἰτία... οὐκ ἀποπηδᾷ τῆς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ταχθείσης τε καὶ αἰρεθείσης ἀνθρωποπρεποῦς εὐταξίας, ἀλλ' εὐπειθῶς ὑποτάττεται...". *CH* IV.4 181C (23:11-13).

89. *DN* II.9 648C (134:7).

90. *Ep.* IV 1072B (160:9).

... above man, having truly become man, henceforward indeed [he] works not the things of God after the manner of God, nor human things after the manner of humanity, but [as] God having become man, he has administered to us a certain new, divine-human activity⁹¹.

The brokenness resulting from the Fall and the rule of the foreign power, the Devil, have themselves been broken. Through the Incarnation the way is again opened to sharing in the life and activity of divinity, to μετουσία – and it is instructive to note that this term is, on three specific occasions in the *CD*, connected with the name and person of Jesus⁹² – and cooperation, συνεργία.

The new life comes to us through the sacraments. In our hierarchy we find not only the perfecting priesthood that Jesus has established, to which he leads us as our “divine and first consecrator”⁹³, but, in addition, within and behind the words and actions coming down to us in his name, we are brought to recognize Jesus himself, “our most divine altar... in whom... being consecrated and mystically consumed, we have our approach”⁹⁴. “In whom” because he has taken our humanity on himself and “sacrifices [or sanctifies, ἀγιάζει] himself on our behalf”. He is our “approach” because the “symbols” of our hierarchy – the sacraments, priesthood, Scripture and ultimately the divinized humanity of Christ himself (of which the former are in fact the extension⁹⁵) – render us sharers in the life and grace and activity of his divinity:

... but receiving in tranquility the beneficent rays of Christ, who is truly God and beyond Good, let us through them be led up in light to his divine good works⁹⁶.

In the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy the division worked by the Fall is overcome. United in Christ, we are united to our immediate superiors, the angels, and, together with them, are called to cooperate with God “according to the Providence of Jesus who works all in all and makes Peace ineffable and fore-ordained from eternity, who has both reconciled us to himself and, in himself, to the Father”⁹⁷. The reconciliation worked through the Incarnation of Jesus is, as Roques writes, a

91. “...ὕπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος γεγονώς, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ κατὰ Θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ’ ἀνδρωθέντος Θεοῦ, καινὴν τινα τὴν θεανδρικήν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος”. *Ibid.* 1072C (161:7-10). We translate the ἡμῖν as “to us” rather than “among us”. See our discussion of *Epistles* I-V at the end of this chapter.

92. *CH* I.3 124A (9:5-6); *VII.2* 208C (29:12-13); and *EH* III.3.13 444C (93:19).

93. *EH* V.3.5 512C (112:8-10).

94. *EH* IV.3.12 484D (103:4-7).

95. See *EH* III.3.9 437C (89:6-10) and *IV.3.10* 484A (102:1-7).

96. “...ἀλλὰ τοῦ ὄντως ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ὑπεραγάθου Χριστοῦ τὰς ἀγαθοποιούς ἀκτῖνας ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ παραδεχόμενοι πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας ἀγαθουργίας αὐτοῦ φωταγωγηθῶμεν”. *Ep.* VIII.1 1085C (173:11-13).

97. *DN* XI.5 953AB (221:8-10).

double one, joining “d’une part, la hiérarchie humaine à la hiérarchie angélique, et qui, de l’autre, récapitule en les achevant... toutes les hiérarchies dans l’unité divine. Christ est partout, il fait tout, il éduque, il sanctifie tout”⁹⁸.

If our redemption and reconciliation are worked once and for all in Christ and are presently realized here-below through the agency of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy that constitutes his presence among us, and if, after the Fall, our “approach to the Father” has been restored to us in Jesus and through his body, the Church, then we should also recognize that for Dionysius, uninterested in the processes of history as he generally is, this reconciliation did not come about immediately. It is the crown of a process of redemption discovered in the sacred history of Israel, a process of which, however briefly and perhaps inadequately, he does take note⁹⁹. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy did not spring full-blown into the darkness of the fallen world. It was anticipated. We find the history of this anticipation noted a number of times in the *EH* in what Dionysius calls the “Legal Hierarchy [ἡ κατὰ νόμον ἱεραρχία]”. Following Hebrews (κατὰ τὸ λόγιον – note especially Heb 5:12ff and 10:1ff), he understands the “dim and unclear” symbols of the Legal Hierarchy, their particular initiation or sacrament (τελετή), as the preparation (ἀναγωγή) for the “spiritual worship” of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. The latter shares in the Celestial Hierarchy through its “spiritual contemplations” (νοεῖαι θεωρίαι), and in the Legal Hierarchy in that, like the latter, it is rendered variously in perceptible symbols and through symbols leads to the divine¹⁰⁰. The “approach” began in the law given by Moses, the “first initiate and leader [ἡγεμών] of the hierarchs according to the Law”¹⁰¹, and was fulfilled in Christ, the first hierarch of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and himself the source and bond of all hierarchies. We note as well those passages in the *CH* that Dionysius devotes to the recollection and explanation of elements in the OT economy, the tutorial role of the angels and the παιδεία (a term that usually means “discipline”¹⁰²) of the old dispensation. These were given to lead to the revelation given in Jesus and participation in the knowledge of “his theurgic lights”. The latter, mediated to us by means of “sensible symbols” and the variety of the sacred Scriptures, are at once the property of angelic being and the reality of our beatitude¹⁰³.

Given the Incarnation and the “approach” to the Father given us in Jesus, how do we actually set about our reconciliation and avail ourselves of this entry? How do we leave the darkness outside to make our way to the light “inside” the doors?

C. THE MYSTERIES: FROM THE DOORS TO THE ALTAR

The sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and the Holy Chrism occupy Dionysius’

98. *L’Univers*, 322.

99. For Brons, totally inadequate; see *Gott u.S.*, 60-64.

100. *EH* V.1.2 501B-D (105:3-16).

101. *Ibid.* (103:11-12).

102. See esp. *CH* XV.5 333C (55:13-14), and *Ep.* IX.6 1113B (206:11).

103. *CH* VII.2 208BC (29:7-18).

attention in Chapters II to IV of the *EH*. These three mysteries represent a certain progression, beginning with the proselyte outside the Church and concluding with a meditation on the mystery of the altar, and on the heart of that mystery, Jesus Christ. Chapters V and VI, on the nature of the priestly ranks and the orders of the laity respectively, follow a descending pattern while at the same time deriving from that central mystery, having their being in it, and looking toward it as their τέλος. At the very beginning of the *EH* Dionysius notes that this mystery is the whole purpose of our hierarchy. We have been given “the sacred operation of the priesthood” through Jesus in order that

We may... become closer to the beings above us [the angels]... enabled [by Jesus] to become consecrated and consecrators... in the form of light and workers of divine things, perfected and workers of perfection¹⁰⁴.

It is through the sacraments that we are called to incorporation into, and conformity to, Christ. They are his “mysteries”, reflections of his “theurgies”¹⁰⁵.

104. *EH* I.1 372B. For Greek see Chapter III above, 162, note 297.

105. For the term μυστήριον as signifying the Incarnation, see: *CH* IV.4 181B (22:23); *DN* II.3 640C (126:2); and *Ep.* III 1069 (159:9); as meaning the sacraments (esp. the Eucharist), see: *EH* I.1 372A (63:6); II.3.8 404D (78:20); III.1 425A (79:17-21); V.1.5 505B (107:19); VI.2 533C (117:14-15); VI.3.5 536C (119:3); *Ep.* IX.1 1108A (197:15); and as referring generally to the hidden things of God (or of the angels) to which we are directed by means of the Revelation, see: *CH* IV.2 180B (21:19); VI.1 200C (26:5-6); *DN* IV.22 724B (170:8); *Ep.* IX.1 1104B (193:10); and *MT* I.1 997A (142:1). The Eucharist is described specifically as “theurgic” in *Ep.* IX.1 1108A (198:4). Dionysius’ theurgy, however, because it is linked to Christ (see also above, Chapter I, 66, note 162), is not equivalent to the theurgies of an Iamblichus. Although the latter emphasizes the free action of the gods (see *de Myst.* I.11-12 and III.17-19 [des Places] 60, 62, 122, 125 respectively) at work in the cult which reveals them (I.21, 76), as well as the role of prayer (V.26, 182), the content and philosophical basis of his mysteries are fundamentally different. Their content features ecstatic or mediumistic trances (eg. III.3 and 14, 102 and 117-118), “ectoplasmic” apparitions (eg. II.3 and 6, 80 and 86), and mysterious “names” of a preferably foreign and incomprehensible sort (VII.4, 192). To these we might add the sacred stones, herbs, and plants Proclus mentions in his *Περί τῆς καθ’ Ἑλλήνας ιερατικῆς τέχνης*, (ed. Bidez) 148-149 – see also Dodds, “Theurgy”, 62-63, and *Theol. Plat.* I.25 (Saffrey and Westerink) 112-113. The philosophical basis lies at once in the doctrine of “sympathy”, the cosmos as a single divine entity (*de Myst.* V.7, 162-163), and in the belief that the lower levels of the world, because more simple, also enjoy a more direct connection to their divine sources (see Gersh, *Iamb. to Eriug.*, 117 and note 179, and Rosán, *Proclus*, 78, 86, and 216-217). Dodds is certainly too harsh in simply dismissing the philosophers’ attempt to justify their cult as a case of “spineless syncretism” (“Theurgy”, 58) and we would do well to heed the more balanced and sympathetic judgments of Festugière (“Proclus et la religion traditionnelle” *Études de la philosophie grecque* [1971] 575-584) and Larson (*Jamblique*, 86-87 and 152-154). Nonetheless, Dionysius’ mysteries are clearly different, of a Christian origin, and “not potent in their own right, but ... the agents of the potency of God” (Sheldon-Williams, *CambHist*, 471-472), as vehicles of – in as much as they derive from – the single mystery of Christ. See also Rorem’s remarks on θεουργία in Dionysius (*Symbols*, 14-15) as signifying the mighty works of God, specifically in Christ.

Our hierarchy is designed to bring us through the variety of the material to deification and to its source in Jesus.

Theosis is defined in the paragraph immediately following:

Theosis is, so far as possible, the assimilation to and union with God; this is the common limit of every hierarchy: the persistent love for God and for divine things as accomplished in sacred fashion, in a manner both inspired and united, and, indeed, prior to this, the complete and undeviating abandonment of all opposites; the knowledge of things as they truly are, the vision and science of the sacred truth; the inspired participation in the perfection which is in the form of the One – indeed [the participation] in the One himself in so far as it is possible – the feast of vision intelligibly feeding and embracing everyone who stretches himself up to it¹⁰⁶.

We note three stages in this definition of deification: 1) the persistent love of God, in which we recognize the ἔσως or desire that is basic to the Dionysian vision, coupled with the rejection of evil. One must will one's actions in accordance with the true *desideratum* and abandon the false. This is the Dionysian purification, or κάθαρσις, whose sign is Baptism. 2) We discover the nature of things as they truly are; the vision of the truth that is given us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. 3) Although the latter holds all the sacraments within itself, Dionysius will choose to use the consecration of the Chrism for his meditation on the final sense of θέωσις: participation in, and contemplation of the divinity that embraces all, and whose Providence knows its definitive revelation in the person of Jesus¹⁰⁷.

After beginning “outside the doors” and advancing to gather everything within the mystery of the altar – with regard to “movement”, we shall have occasion to point out a certain echo of the three spiritual motions, “straight”, “spiral”, and “circular”, in Dionysius’ presentation of Baptism, Eucharist and Chrism – we move out from the center in the last three chapters and travel back down the ranks of the clergy and faithful until, in Chapter VII and his discussion of Christian burial, we are led once more outside the enclosure of the Church. This time, however, it is no longer in fear of dissolution and non-existence, but in confident anticipation of the promise of the Resurrection.

1. Baptism: the mystery of entry and first stage of the ascent

If the Fall led to a break-up of unity, and to division as the ruling principle in our world, a ruling principle which further led to a reversal of the natural hierarchy of λόγος, θυμός, and ἐπιθυμία, to the rule of the passions, and at last to dissolution (ἀνυπαρξία), then the order in Dionysius’ discussion of Baptism is

106. *EH* I.3 376A. For Greek see Chapter III above, notes 89 and 123.

107. See *DN* XII.2 969C (224:13-225:3); *Ep.* IX.1 1104C (194:1-4); and *EH* I.3 373C (66:6-8).

precisely the reverse. We begin, as it were, in the shades of non-being, the illusory existence of life “outside the doors”, and in need therefore of another birth:

For if the divine birth is to be in divine fashion, then neither can one ever know aught of the things divinely delivered, nor in any way accomplish them, who does not possess the mode of existing in divine manner. Or are we not obliged (we speak here in human fashion) first to exist, and then to accomplish the things that are proper to us, in as much as that which in no way exists has neither movement nor existence, but only when something somehow exists does it accomplish or suffer those things which are proper to it¹⁰⁸.

Only when incorporated into the Dionysian body of Christ, or “City of God” (ἡ ἐνθεος... πολιτεία), can one truly exist and be endowed with the capacity for accomplishing what is proper to nature, i.e., deification. We therefore find a warning concluding the introduction to this chapter, embellished with reminders drawn from grim OT precedents, against permitting any non-initiate (ἀτέλεστος) approach to the sacred things¹⁰⁹.

a) The rite

This section begins with a description of the hierarch in the likeness of God and of the divine φιλανθρωπία. God desires all to be saved and to unite “all, in the manner of fire, to himself, according to their aptitude for deification”¹¹⁰. Having stated the theme of the whole CD, Dionysius describes the entry into the τάξις of the Church: 1) outside the Church an “initiate” (layperson) is approached as prospective sponsor by one who “desires... salvation”. 2) The layperson agrees, and leads the catechumen into the Church to the hierarch¹¹¹. 3) Giving thanks for the “one beneficent rule [ἀρχή]”¹¹², the hierarch salutes the altar and leaves the sanctuary for the body of the nave where the whole assembly, gathered in the “sacred space [ιερός χώρος] gives thanks for a man’s salvation”¹¹³. 4) The catechumen confesses past godlessness (ἀθεότης), “ignorance [ἄγνοσία] of the truly good”, and his failure to accomplish (ἀνεργησία) anything of “the divine life”. 5) The hierarch instructs the catechumen concerning the divine polity to which he (or she) is seeking entry, and inscribes him¹¹⁴. 6) The rite of Baptism

108. “Εἰ γὰρ τὸ εἶναι θεῖως ἐστὶν ἡ θεία γέννησις, οὐ μὴ ποτέ τι γνοίη τῶν θεοπαράδοτων οὔτε μὴν ἐνεργήσειεν ὁ μηδὲ τὸ ὑπάρχειν ἐνθέως ἐσχηκώς. Ἡ οὐχὶ καὶ ἡμῖν (ἀνθρωπίνως φαμέν) ὑπάρξειαι δεῖ πρῶτον, εἶτα ἐνεργῆσαι τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὡς τοῦ μηδαμῶς ὄντος οὐδὲ κίνησιν [ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ὑπαρξιν ἔχοντος, τοῦ δὲ πού ὄντος ἐκεῖνα μόνον ἐνεργοῦντος ἢ πάσχοντος ἐν οἷς εἶναι πέφυκεν”. *EH* II.1 392B (69:7-12).

109. *Ibid.* 392C (69:14-19).

110. *EH* II.2.1 393A (70:6-7).

111. *EH* II.2.2 393B (70:11-19).

112. *EH* II.2.3 393C (71:3).

113. *Ibid.* II.2.4 393C (71:6-7).

114. *EH* II.2.5 396A (71:15-18).

historique... le *typos* devient l'un des nombreux synonymes de *symbolon* et de l'*eikon*"¹²¹. While Roques is careful to note that Dionysius does not eliminate history¹²², he does claim that it is nonetheless "attenuated" in favor of *θέωσις*: "the return to the intelligible which alone and of itself is divine and divinizing"¹²³. He describes Dionysius' approach as "transhistoric rather than historic" and "always of a vertical orientation"¹²⁴, and concludes that "the truth, according to Dionysius, is by essence the intelligible"¹²⁵.

In reply, we offer the following three, cautionary points. First, although there can be no denying Dionysius' "vertical" bias, it would be no less foolish to deny (and Roques, at least, does not entirely) the presence of a certain temporal thrust within the *EH*. Dionysius is not fundamentally interested in history, true. We recall, however, that we have already pointed (and will again) to a certain quality of "unfinished business" represented by the very imperfections of our hierarchy – i.e., the latter remains, in this age, an inconsistent reflection of the Celestial Hierarchy¹²⁶. The eschatological is neither wholly lacking nor wholly extraneous to our author's notion of "symbol". We began this chapter by noting that the action of the *EH* unfolds between two deaths or births, with the first birth, Baptism, anticipating the second, the general Resurrection, and we intend to show a real movement within the *EH* from Chapter II on the mystery of "entry" to the final Chapter on the mystery of Christian burial, the sanctified "exit" in sure hope of the age to come. This movement and its associated hope both pervade the *EH* and provide the whole of the *CD* with a certain necessary, "historical" presence.

Our second point consists of a reminder concerning the nature of the *νοητόν* as Dionysius conceives it. The Dionysian *κόσμος νοητός* is not the realm of Platonic ideas, nor the *Noûs* of Plotinus, nor the hypostatized categories of Proclus. At the (secondary) level of created being it is instead a cosmos or world of creatures wholly sanctified and altogether transparent to the Creator, a body or organism deriving its being from, and radiating the being of, its single head or "cause", the "divinity of Jesus". While we may read this as Dionysius' adaptation of the Procline doctrine that all effects are present in the cause, we also recall that it can no less easily be ascribed to the teaching of the NT, as suggested by such texts as Eph 1:20-23, Phil 2:6-11, Heb 1:1-4 and 2:8, and, especially, the verses from Col 1:15ff.

God is the deepest and primary level of the *νοητά*, the source of the *νοητοί*.

121. "Baptême", 434-435. But see our discussion in Chapter IX, 360-361, of Ephrem of Syria's practically identical treatment of the Syriac equivalents for *τύπος*, *σύμβολον*, etc. His purpose in doing so is also the same as Dionysius': to witness to the Incarnation.

122. *Ibid.*

123. *Ibid.* 443.

124. *Ibid.* 448. See also Sheldon-Williams, *CambHist*, 459; and, opposed, Völker, *Kontemplation*, 18, 59 and 63.

125. *Ibid.* 435.

126. See Chapters II and III above, 96-97 and 141 respectively.

By "divinity" we refer to the Dionysian notion of the λόγοι as outlined above, and to the "names" of God that lend expression to his eternally flowing activities *ad extra*. Again, we encounter here a notion of the "intelligible world" for which we feel the associations conjured up by such expressions as "mind", "idea", "forms" to be dangerously misleading. In employing such terms as λόγοι, ἐνέργειαι, δυνάμεις, Dionysius intends the non-hypostatized activities or wills of God at work in creation. In a word, he means Providence, and Providence in turn refers in general to the Trinity, and specifically to the Second Person of the Three in whom the θεία πρόνοια has acquired a human face: "Who is the εἰκὼν of the invisible God" (Col 1:15).

The third point concerns the Dionysian notion of σύμβολον. We agree with Roques in seeing truth for Dionysius as the "intelligible significance which the purified intelligence discovers in the biblical or sacramental symbols", such that "*typos* becomes another of the numerous synonyms for *symbolon* and *eikon*"¹²⁷. Now, let us recall first that for Dionysius both the latter terms refer to a kind of incarnation of the divine in the universe of matter and distension in time, and thus that, secondly, anything "symbolic" must reasonably discover its true source and validation in the supreme instance of divine condescension, the Incarnation proper. The "vision of the sacred truth" or contemplation of the νοητά is then inseparable from the person and activity of Christ. The exercise of the discursive intellect is invalid unless it has first been initiated into the Christian mysteries. As Roques himself observes: "... nous ne pouvons rien faire de valable... sans l'initiation baptismale... la méthode démonstrative doit être insérée au coeur même de la révélation transcendante... l'intelligence illuminée"¹²⁸. The sense and coherence of the world of humans, our world's soul as it were, must be sought at the altar. Our intellectual powers, given for the apperception of that reality, are of no use to us unless we first "put on Christ"¹²⁹.

c) The contemplation: a triple reality and revelation

According to a pattern which he will apply to each of the sacraments of our hierarchy, Dionysius' contemplation of Baptism is threefold. The sacrament is a reflection on: 1) the mystery of the individual believer's purification and its corresponding spiritual motion; 2) on the all-encompassing mystery of Christ; 3) and an illustration of God's activity in relation to His creation. Put another way, the same sacrament at once typifies an aspect of the redeemed soul, is a sharing in Christ, and reveals God's universal Providence. Mutually reinforcing, the different levels of meaning are present simultaneously and without conflict.

127. "Baptême", 434-435.

128. "Note sur théologie", 206, commenting on *Ep. IX* 1105.

129. The whole discussion of the νοητά here might also be applied to P. Rorem's and C. Liubheid's consistent rendering, in their Paulist Press translation of the *CD*, of νοητόν, etc. as "conceptual". The latter, in light of our argument, is quite inadequate. Thus, for example, Rorem's characterization of Dionysius as wholly preoccupied with "epistemology" in *Commentary*, 93.

i) *The soul: direct motion*

Baptism is purification¹³⁰, the first stage of deification. The proselyte is moved by desire (ἀγάπησις) for the divine and, simultaneously, becomes aware of his own inadequacy, his own faults. He repents, and his repentance is met by the “divine beatitude” acting through the hierarch to lead him up, in due degrees, to the divinity itself¹³¹. The repentance, although out of desire for God, is a voluntary departure (ἀποφοίτησις) from evil, as signified by the renunciation of Satan and the exorcisms¹³². It is also a continual process:

... never at any time is there to occur any relaxation of the sacred love for the truth, rather [the neophyte] is, in sacred fashion, to work wholeheartedly, attentively and eternally at stretching himself up to the most perfect things of the Thearchy¹³³.

The divine beneficence remains inalterable¹³⁴, but it can be refused. The human “capacity for willed action [αὐθαίρετος αὐτεξουσιότης]”¹³⁵ can either “shut up its naturally implanted capacities for illumination”, be drawn by a “desire for evil” (the “seeming good”), and so remove itself from the light¹³⁶, or else, as in the Baptismal sequence, recognize the true goal of desire, repent of the old ways, and strive to persevere in the good in order that, thus implanted in the vision and ways of God, the soul may be, in due order, wholly “cleansed of its (i.e., of the ἐναντίας ζωῆς) fantasies by means of a pure, divine mode of life and desire [ἔξει καὶ ἔρωτι]”¹³⁷. The spiritual motion typified by this continual purification is the “straight” or “direct”. Thanks to Dionysius’ “telescoping” of the action, we see this illustrated in an unbroken, linear progression: from “outside the doors” into the vestibule, then the nave, and finally to the altar itself.

ii) *Christ*

The proselyte is called to repentance, to change his ways¹³⁸ but this happens only through and in Jesus. The neophyte is “called to the contests [ἀγῶνες]” of virtue and

130. See *EH* II.3.1 397B (73:17-19) and II.3.5 401B (76:11-21).

131. *EH* II.3.4 400C (75:12-19).

132. *EH* II.3.5 401B (76:19-20).

133. “...οὐδὲ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς ἀληθείας ἔρωτος ἐν καταλήξει ποτὲ γενέσθαι, προσεχῶς δὲ καὶ αἰωνίως ἐπ’ αὐτήν, ὅση δύναμις, ἀνατείνεσθαι τὴν ἐπὶ τὰ τελεώτερα τῆς θεαρχίας ἀναγωγὴν ἱερῶς αἰεὶ διαπραγματευόμενον”. *EH* II.3.5 401C (77:5-8).

134. *EH* II.3.3 397D (74:12-14).

135. Concerning this term, see our discussion of Gregory of Nyssa, Chapter VII below, 307-308.

136. *EH* II.3.3 397D-400A (74:15-17).

137. *EH* III.3.7 436B (87:18-19).

138. See the summary by Hornus, “Reflections”, 40.

is placed accordingly under the judge who awards the prize, Christ, since as God he is maker of the games, as wise he has laid down the rules, and as beautiful [καλὸς] has made the prizes becoming to the victors. And, yet more divine, because he is indeed good, he entered in sacred fashion into the games with them, and struggled with the empire of death and corruption for the sake of their freedom and victory. The initiate, rejoicing, sets forth to the contests as to divine things, abiding by the rules of him who is wise, and according to them, strives without transgression, being certain in the hope of the beautiful prizes and ranged [ranked] under the Good Lord and Ruler of the games. And, when he has set forth upon the footsteps of him who, out of goodness, was first of the athletes, [in] his theomimetic struggles with the activities and beings which wrestle with him against θέωσις, he dies together with Christ in Baptism¹³⁹.

It would be difficult to imagine a more traditional presentation. In order properly to exercise our free will and so to conquer πάθος and ἐπιθυμία¹⁴⁰, to give play thus to the thrust of the “vector” or ἀναλογία that God has implanted in us to impel us to participation in himself, we must become partakers of the “theurgies” of Christ¹⁴¹. It is his game in every sense that we are called to share.

Thus the necessity of Baptism: we must share in Christ’s death to sin. For, as Dionysius tells us in an admittedly rare reference to Christ’s death, just as death is the separation of the united body and soul, with the consequent disappearance of the body in the earth and vanishing of the soul “as becoming formless [ἄειδῆ – certainly a curious notion of “form” for a reputed Neoplatonist] without the body”, so is

... the complete veiling through water received as an icon of death and the formlessness of the tomb. The symbolic teaching thus initiates the baptizand, by means of the triple immersion, into the imitation of the divine death and three-day sojourn in the tomb of Jesus, the life-giver¹⁴².

139. “...ὕπ’ ἀθλοθέτῃ Χριστῷ γινόμενος, ἐπειδὴ ὡς θεὸς ἐστὶ τῆς ἀθλοθεσίας δημιουργός, ὡς σοφὸς δὲ τοὺς νόμους αὐτῆς τέθεικεν, εἰργάσατο δὲ ὡς καλὸς εὐπρεπῇ τοῖς νικῶσι τὰ ἔπαθλα, καὶ τὸ ἔτι θεϊότερον· ἐπεὶ περ ὡς ἀγαθὸς ἐν τοῖς ἀθληταῖς ἐγεγόνει μετ’ αὐτῶν ἱερῶς ὑπὲρ τῆς αὐτῶν ἐλευθερίας καὶ νίκης πρὸς τὸ τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς ἀγωνιζόμενος κράτος, τοῖς μὲν ἀγῶσιν ὡς θείοις ὁ τελούμενος ἐπιβήσεται χαίρων, ἐμμενεῖ δὲ ταῖς τοῦ σοφοῦ νομοθεσίαις καὶ κατ’ αὐτάς ἀπαραβάτως ἀγωνιεῖται πρὸς τὴν τῶν καλῶν ἐπάθλων ἐλπίδα βεβαίως ἔχων ὑπ’ ἀγαθῷ τῆς ἀθλοθεσίας κυρίῳ καὶ ἡγεμόνι ταπτόμενος, ἐπιβὰς δὲ τοῖς θείοις ἴχνησι τοῦ ἀθλητοῦ πρώτου δι’ ἀγαθότητα ταῖς θεομιμήτοις ἀθλήσεσι τὰς πρὸς θέωσιν ἐναντίας αὐτῷ καταπαλαίσας ἐνεργείας τε καὶ ὑπάρξεις συναποθνήσκει Χριστῷ μυστικῶς εἰπεῖν τῇ ἁμαρτία κατὰ τὸ βάπτισμα. *EH* II.2.6 401D-404A (77:12-23).

140. See our discussion of these themes in Evagrius, Chapter VIII below, 322-325.

141. See above, note 105.

142. “...ἡ δι’ ὕδατος ὀλικὴ κάλυψις εἰς τὴν τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ τῆς ταφῆς ἀειδοῦς εἰκόνα παρείληπται. Τὸν οὖν ἱερῶς βαπτιζόμενον ἡ συμβολικὴ διδασκαλία μυσταγωγεῖ ταῖς ἐν τῷ ὕδατι τρισὶ καταδύσεσι τὸν θεαρχικὸν τῆς τριημερονύκτου ταφῆς Ἰησοῦ τοῦ ζωοδότου μιμεῖσθαι θάνατον...”. *EH* II.3.7 404B (78:6-9).

The vesting in white robes and the anointing with Chrism bears witness to the fact that,

By means of the courageous and deiform dispassion with regard to the contrary powers, and by earnest inclination towards the One, that which was without beauty is adorned and the formless given form, rendered shining by the life that is wholly in the form of light¹⁴³.

Sharing in Christ's death to sin, Baptism is the birth to life in God. Thus we find the anointing with Chrism, the "sweet savor" of the Holy Spirit, following the immersion: "for the sacred initiation of the divine birth unites the things so consecrated with the thearchic Spirit"¹⁴⁴. Finally, the gift of the Eucharist completes the process of entry, sealing the baptismal purification with illumination and union.

iii) *Icon of Providence*

Contemplated as veiling spiritual realities (νοητά), Baptism reveals the same truths concerning uncreated realities and created nature that we encountered earlier. The *θεία ἀγαθότης* which sends forth its rays upon all¹⁴⁵, recalls the solar imagery of the Good pouring out its energies upon all creation that we met in the *DN*: "the unique, beneficent *ἀρχή* by which all things are called"¹⁴⁶, and the *φιλανθρωπία* that seeks the salvation of all¹⁴⁷. Similarly, the recognition of desire (*ἀγάπησις*) for the Good that moves the proselyte to seek entry, and the model of the hierarch, recalls the *ἔρως* that finds its end in God. Yet, as well as revealing the "sacred order" whose source is "the divine", this icon of seeking and receiving, of the candidate's longing and the bishop's gracious reception, is finally a statement that neither repentance and conversion, nor the acceptance exercised on behalf of (or in imitation of) God's philanthropy and rendering it present, is possible outside the Church. If we begin with desire for the good, we must end in Jesus and before his altar. Turning, then, to the consideration of that altar, we proceed to the second mystery of our hierarchy.

2. The Eucharist: illumination and the "sacrament of sacraments"

a) The central mystery

The Eucharist is second of the three main mysteries of the Church considered by Dionysius. It is also the central one. In a rare and genuinely autobiographical

143. "Τῇ γὰρ ἀνδρικῇ καὶ θεοειδεῖ τῶν ἐναντίων ἀπαθεία καὶ τῇ πρὸς τὸ ἐν συντονίᾳ συννεύσει τὸ ἄκοσμον κοσμεῖται καὶ τὸ ἀνείδεον εἰδοποιεῖται τῇ φωτοειδεῖ καθόλου ζῶν λαμπρυνόμενον". *EH* II.3.8 404C (78:11-14).

144. *Ibid.* (78:15-16).

145. *EH* II.3.3 397D (74:12-14).

146. *EH* II.2.3 393C (71:3-4).

147. *EH* II.2.1 393A (70:4-7).

passage, he writes of himself that it was the Eucharist that provided him with his key to the whole revelation:

If indeed all the hierarchic things have it in common to impart the holy light to those being initiated, it is yet this one which first gave me to see, and through its most ruling light to be led up in illumination to the vision of the other sacred things¹⁴⁸.

The Eucharist is the “sacrament of sacraments [τελετή τελετῶν]”¹⁴⁹. It enjoys this pre-eminence because it is literally, as it were, at the center, and because its activity is precisely “to center”, i.e., to gather all back up and into God. We find thus the second of its two names preferred by our author to be σύναξις. Boularand has shown that this term¹⁵⁰, together with the other name, κοινωνία (less specifically tied than is the former to the sacrament itself¹⁵¹), agrees with the tradition of West Syrian usage. Σύναξις, from the verb συνάγω, is also in accord with the whole CD¹⁵². It is, of course, true that every sacrament is in some sense a “gathering” or “rolling-up” into unity. In the following, Dionysius employs both synonyms:

... each holy sacrament both gathers together our disparate lives into uniform deification and, by the rolling-up in God-like manner of the divisions, grants communion and union with the One¹⁵³.

The Eucharist, however, being that action which acts supremely to unite us with the cause (αἰτία) of our and every hierarchy, Christ, remains nonetheless the “gathering-together” or “rolling-up” *par excellence*. As the “chief” or “sum” of all the other sacraments (κεφάλαιον τελετῶν¹⁵⁴), the whole Ecclesiastical Hierarchy meets in and depends on it.

It is not possible for scarcely any consecration to be effected without the most divine Eucharist that sacredly works to gather the one initiated together into the One and, by means of the divinely-delivered gift of the

148. “Εἰ γὰρ πᾶσι κοινὸν τοῖς ἱεραρχικοῖς τὸ φωτὸς ἱεροῦ μεταδιδόναι τοῖς τελουμένοις, ἀλλ’ αὕτη τὸ πρῶτως ἰδεῖν ἔδωρήσατό μοι καὶ διὰ τοῦ ταύτης ἀρχιφώτου φωτὸς πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἄλλων ἱερῶν ἐποψίαν φωταγωγοῦμαι”. EH III.1 425AB (80:1-4).

149. *Ibid.* 424C (79:3).

150. E. Boularand, “L’Eucharistie d’après le ps.-Denys” BLE 58 (1957) 193-217 and 59 (1958) 129-169; here we are referring to 199-204.

151. *Ibid.* 198.

152. See Stiglmayer, “Die Lehre”, 268-269, and our remarks concerning συνάγω and συμπτύσσω, Chapter III above, 138, note 148, and Chapter IX below on “Macarius”, 380, note 224.

153. “...ἐκάστης ἱεροτελεστικῆς πραγματείας καὶ τὰς μεριστὰς ἡμῶν ζωὰς εἰς ἐνοειδῇ θέωσιν συναγούσης καὶ τῇ τῶν διαιρετῶν θεοειδεῖ συμπτύξει τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἓν κοινωνίαν καὶ ἔνωσιν δωρουμένης”. EH III.1 424CD (79:9-12).

154. EH VI.3.5 536C (119:3-4).

consecrating mysteries, to bring to completion his communion with God... the goal of every [sacrament] being the communion of the divine mysteries for him who is being initiated [or consecrated]¹⁵⁵.

b) The recapitulation of Providence, of Christ, and of humanity

It is therefore scarcely surprising to discover both the *CD*'s central themes, the general economy of Providence for created being and the culminating act of the Incarnation, most extensively discussed in the *EH*'s contemplation of the *σύναξις*¹⁵⁶. These themes are the "holy principles [*ἀρχαί*]" toward which the bishop is "led up by the thearchic Spirit... in blessed and spiritual visions and purity of deiform *ἕξις*"¹⁵⁷. At the very beginning of Dionysius' contemplation of the Eucharist and before any discussion of the "theurgies" or specific action of the Incarnation, we are thus introduced to the leitmotif of the Dionysian vision: the triad of *μονή* - *πρόοδος* - *ἐπιστροφή*. Dionysius sees this pattern reflected – better, participated – in the entire action of the Eucharist itself, and here in the specific activity of the bishop beginning the service with a general censuring of the Church.

For the thearchic beatitude which is beyond all things, while indeed going forth in divine goodness for the communion with the holy ones who participate in it, yet departs not from the unmoving *στάσις* and foundation which it possesses by essence; and it both shines in due measure on the deiform, and... swerves not at all from its proper identity. Just so, the divine sacrament of the *σύναξις*, while possessing its *ἀρχή* [as] single, simple, and inclusive, is multiplied in philanthropic manner in the sacred variety of the symbols, and travels unto all the thearchic iconography while, at the same time, it is gathered in uniform manner from these into its proper monad, and unifies those who are in sacred fashion led up to it. In the same manner, then, the divine hierarch, while indeed he brings his single science of the hierarchy beneficently down to the subordinate [ranks], making use of the multitude of sacred enigmas, yet he is at the same time, as unconditioned and unchecked by the lesser, restored without diminishment to [his] proper *ἀρχή*, and, having made his spiritual entry to the One, beholds in pure fashion the uniform *λόγοι* of the things accomplished, and makes the limit [accomplishment] of his philanthropic procession to the

155. "Οὐ γὰρ ἔνεστιν σχεδόν τινα τελεσθῆναι τελετὴν ἱεραρχικὴν μὴ τῆς θειοτάτης εὐχαριστίας ἐν κεφαλαίῳ τῶν καθ' ἑκάστα τελουμένων τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ἐν τοῦ τελεσθέντος ἱεουργούσης συναγωγὴν καὶ τῇ θεοπαράδοτῳ δωρεᾷ τῶν τελειωτικῶν μυστηρίων τελεσιουργούσης αὐτοῦ τὴν πρὸς θεὸν κοινωνίαν... τὸ δὲ τέλος ἀπάση καὶ τὸ κεφάλαιον ἢ τῶν θεαρχικῶν μυστηρίων τῷ τελουμένῳ μετάδοσις". *EH* III.1 424D-425A (79:14-22).

156. See Boularand, "L'Eucharistie", 213-216.

157. *EH* III.2.1 428A (81:11-13).

δεύτερα his more divine return to the πρώτα¹⁵⁸.

We see repeated on several different levels – on that of the spiritual-intelligible principle of the Eucharist, of the action of the rite itself, and of the personal state of the hierarch – the original principle of the One and the Many held together in God, unity indivisibly multiplied in its relation to the creature – the themes of the *DN*. Before objecting that this is simply to make of the Christian sacrament an illustration of metaphysical principles, let us take a moment to look more closely at this text. Recalling the nature of the Fall and its results: loss of unity, brokenness, false love, and death, and of our restoration through Jesus in the Incarnation, we should see in this description of the hierarch less an example of philosophical *dicta* than, in fact, the pattern of humanity restored. The hierarch's is the pattern of θεομίμησις made possible for humanity through the Incarnation. Here is the true sense of the “deiform ἔξις”, i.e., the imitation of (and imitation because true participation in) the divine love. We note again the essentially Christian conversion of the Neoplatonic “procession” and “return” that Dionysius has accomplished: contemplation of God in love necessarily means sharing in his love for creation. Loving means participation in love. The hierarch, as exemplar of Christian perfection, “realizes his ‘return’ [as] the accomplishment [πέρας] of his philanthropic ‘procession.’” The love which “suffers the divine” is one and the same with the love that is active in the world. We ask the reader to note the transition: God is mirrored by the rite, and the latter in turn is reflected in the man. All three levels of the mystery are at once present and fully valid. The Creator is mirrored by the redeemed world, and the macrocosm of the Church by the microcosm of the holy man.

The mystery is also one. It is to Jesus that we look for the model of the hierarch's actions. Better than model, he is rather the presence working through and in the bishop, the “proper ἀρχή” to which the latter is restored. His “mind” constitutes the hierarch's “single science”¹⁵⁹. The ἀρχή of the σύναξις, and the

158. “Ἡ τε γὰρ ὑπὲρ πάντα θεαρχικὴ μακαριότης, εἰ καὶ ἀγαθότητι θεία πρόεισιν εἰς τὴν τῶν μετεχόντων αὐτῆς ἱερῶν κοινωνίαν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔξω τῆς κατ’ οὐσίαν ἀκινήτου στάσεως καὶ ἰδρύσεως γίγνεται, πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς θεοειδέσιν ἀναλόγως ἐλλάμπει... καὶ τῆς οἰκείας ὁλως οὐ παρακινουμένη ταυτότητος. Ὡσαύτως ἡ θεία τῆς συνάξεως τελετή, κἂν ἐνιαίαν καὶ ἀπλὴν ἔχουσα καὶ συνεπτυγμένην ἀρχὴν εἰς τὴν ἱερὰν ποικιλίαν τῶν συμβόλων φιλανθρωπῶς πληθύνηται καὶ μέχρι πάσης χωρῇ τῆς ἱεραρχικῆς εἰκονογραφίας, ἀλλ’ ἐνοειδῶς ἐκ τούτων αὐθις εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν μονάδα συνάγεται καὶ ἐνοποιεῖ τοὺς ἐπ’ αὐτὴν ἱερῶς ἀναγομένους. Κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ θεοειδῆ τρόπον ὁ θεὸς ἱεράρχης, εἰ καὶ τὴν ἐνιαίαν αὐτοῦ τῆς ἱεραρχίας ἐπιστήμην ἀγαθοειδῶς εἰς τοὺς ὑποβεβηκότας κατὰγει τοῖς τῶν ἱερῶν αἰνιγμάτων πλήθει χρώμενος, ἀλλ’ αὐθις ὡς ἀπόλυτος καὶ τοῖς ἡττοσιν ἀκατάσχετος εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρχὴν ἀμειώτως ἀποκαθίσταται καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ ἐν ἑαυτοῦ νοεράν ποιησάμενος εἴσοδον ὁρᾷ καθαρῶς τοὺς τῶν τελουμένων ἐνοειδεῖς λόγους τῆς ἐπὶ τὰ δεύτερα φιλανθρωποῦ προόδου τὸ πέρας τὴν εἰς τὰ πρώτα θειοτέραν ἐπιστροφὴν ποιούμενος. *EH* III.3.3 429AB (82:17-83:10).

159. See Chapter III above, 132-133.

sacrament's activity, are identical with Jesus' person and "theandric activity". There is nothing in the passage that is at variance with the essentially Christian inspiration and traditional vocabulary found in Dionysius' account of Baptism. Nothing has altered, save here the terminology of the philosophers, as well the stress – perfectly traditional – on the centrality of the Eucharist. The latter both validates and seals the salvific activity of all the Church's mysteries as itself, we should say, peculiarly the sacrament of the Church. Beneath the forms and types we are to discern Jesus who works all in all, and who is made present among us through these same actions and "symbols" – indeed, who unites us to himself through the same. Here is the sense of Dionysius' prayer directed to the Eucharist, i.e., the illumination necessary to recognize the reality hidden in the forms¹⁶⁰. Here, too, we find a reply in part to the criticisms made of Dionysius' insufficient sacramental realism¹⁶¹, a question to which we shall return shortly.

c) The rite

The description Dionysius gives of the service is as follows: 1) the ruling themes of divine condescension and redemption are outlined in the two paragraphs¹⁶² devoted to the interpretation of the psalms and the other readings heard prior to the offertory. We are taught in these readings the "unique concordance [σύνμυνοια]"¹⁶³, or single thread, of divine intent revealed in the sacred writings (θεολογία) and accomplished in the divine work (θεουργία) of Jesus¹⁶⁴. 2) We move in the following two paragraphs¹⁶⁵ to a consideration of the κάθαρσις of the catechumens and penitents. The former are quite incapable of responding as yet to the greater things and, as illustrating the divine justice of the hierarchy which gives salvation to each according to his ἀναλογία (a clear reference, both here and in that which immediately follows, to the as yet fluid nature of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy) and worthiness (ἁξία), are therefore dismissed at the conclusion of the readings¹⁶⁶. The penitents and possessed are dismissed as being too weak (the former) or altogether "strangers to the vision" of the sacraments (the latter). They also occasion a meditation on the demonic powers and the imprisoned life¹⁶⁷. 3) Opening the liturgy of the faithful, we find a reference to what must be the Creed¹⁶⁸ and with it a recollection of the grace of the Incarnation that "restored" us to communion with divine things¹⁶⁹. 4) Dionysius sketches the offertory, kiss of

160. EH III.2 428A (81:11-14).

161. See, for example, Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 87, and note 185 below.

162. EH III.3.4 and III.3.5 429C-432B (83:11-84:21).

163. From Gandillac's translation, *Oeuvres Complètes du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite* (Paris: 1943) 269.

164. EH III.3.5 432B (84:20-21).

165. EH III.3.6-7 431C-436D (84:22-88:9).

166. EH III.3.6 432C-433B (84:22-85:1).

167. EH III.3.7 433D-436A (86:16-24).

168. *Ibid.* 436C (87:22). See Boularand, "L'Eucharistie", 144-152.

169. *Ibid.* 436CD (87:24-88:9).

peace, diptychs, and lustration of the clergy prior to the *anaphora*¹⁷⁰. The diptychs recall the blessed dead, who are not separated from the body of faithful in Christ¹⁷¹. With the kiss and the lustration, the theme of purification predominates¹⁷². The admonitions are more intense and exacting in reference to the clergy's lustration. As they are called to "the most perfect hierurgy", so they must be completely purified from even "the last fantasies of the spirit" in order to be conformed to the likeness of the sacred things they are about to effect, and to be without reproach before Christ¹⁷³. 5) Purified and "united with divine things", the hierarch, "having hymned the sacred hierurgies, sacredly performs the most divine things and brings into sight the things which are hymned"¹⁷⁴. 6) The communion of clergy and laity follow¹⁷⁵.

d) Ὑπ' ὁψιν: recognition of a real presence

The latter phrase, ὕπ' ὁψιν ἄγει τὰ ὑμνούμενα, occurs three times: above as cited, again in paragraph 12 with the addition, "through the symbols sacredly set forth"¹⁷⁶, and finally in the following paragraph, slightly altered: "bringing into sight, as in images, Jesus Christ our spiritual life, from the secrecy proper to the divine"¹⁷⁷. While Dionysius will continue to repeat the themes bearing on purification throughout these paragraphs¹⁷⁸, it nonetheless appears to us that we have discovered in the phrase above the crux not only of the Eucharist and the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, but the heart of the Dionysian vision itself.

We must ask first what our author means by the ὑμνούμενα here. As detailed in the whole of *EH* III.3.11, it would appear that they refer primarily to the saving acts of the Incarnation. To "hymn" these is, in a sense, to render them present and, with them, to make present Jesus himself: ὕπ' ὁψιν... τὰ ὑμνούμενα – ὕπ' ὁψιν... Ἰησοῦν. It remains to ask in precisely what sense we mean "present". Following the account of the economy and beginning in III.3.12, Dionysius continues:

And how could the θεομίμητον otherwise come to pass in us, unless the memory of the most sacred hierurgies were being perpetually renewed by both the hierarchical sacred teaching and ministrations... wherefore [the hierarch], following the sacred hymns of the theurgies, at once reverently and in hierarchical fashion apologizes for the ministry which is beyond him,

170. *EH* III.3.8-10 437A-440B (88:10-90:10).

171. *EH* III.3.9 437B (88:22-27).

172. *EH* III.3.8 437A (88:15-21).

173. *EH* III.3.10 440AB (89:14-90:8).

174. *Ibid.* 440B (90:10).

175. *EH* III.3.14 444D-445B (93:23-94:10).

176. *EH* III.3.12 444A (92:17-18).

177. *EH* III.3.13 444C (93:14-16).

178. See, for example, *EH* III.3.12 444B (93:6-9); III.3.13 444CD (93:20-22); and III.3.14 445A (94:3-6).

crying beforehand [the consecration itself] in holy fashion to him [Jesus]:
 “Thou hast said, Do this in remembrance of me”¹⁷⁹.

With the terms “memory [μνήμη]” and “recollection [ἀνάμνησις]” does our author intend simply a “calling to mind”, but not a declaration of presence, a “memorial” or “symbolic” action in the modern sense? Such a notion of “symbol” is inadequate to the Dionysian idea of hierarchy generally and thus, all the more, to the “consecratory invocations... in which the powers of God are at work”¹⁸⁰. We read that it is the “renewal of memory” alone which enables the θεομίμητον. The latter is nothing more nor less than the participation of the reason-endowed creature in God’s energies, which means in turn, for us, in the θεανδρική ἐνέργεια of Jesus. The θεομίμητον is Dionysius’ equivalent to the new life in God given or restored in Christ. It is the life of his body, the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. In order to share in the new life we require the renewal of the ἀνάμνησις, that representation of the sacred acts of the Incarnation which truly brings those acts, and in them, Jesus, “into sight”. Dionysius would certainly appear to be suggesting this, both when he refers to the hierarch’s consciousness of his ministry as being “beyond” or “above” his own powers and when he continues:

Then, having asked to be made worthy of this theomimetic ministry and, by means of the assimilation to Christ himself, to accomplish the things divine and to distribute them in a manner all-pure, and that those participating may do so in a manner befitting them... [dividing the “indivisible” bread and portioning the “single” cup] he symbolically multiplies and distributes the unity, accomplishing in these things [his] all-pure ministry¹⁸¹.

This passage is followed immediately by a second recollection of the Incarnation and its saving effects, together with an exhortation to conform ourselves to Jesus; “for it is thus that the communion with the life [τὸ ὁμοίον] will be given in harmonious fashion”¹⁸². This sequence or pattern, and the third ὑπ’ ὄψιν, are repeated in the following paragraph:

These things [i.e., τὰ ὑμνούμενα] the hierarch makes manifest in the

179. “Τὸ θεομίμητον δὲ πῶς ἂν ἡμῖν ἑτέρως ἐγγένοιτο μὴ τῆς τῶν ἱερωτάτων θεουργιῶν μνήμης ἀνανευμένης αἰεὶ ταῖς ἱεραρχικαῖς ἱερολογίαις τε καὶ ἱερουργίαις;... ὅθεν εὐλαβῶς τε ἅμα καὶ ἱεραρχικῶς μετὰ τοὺς ἱερούς τῶν θεουργιῶν ὕμνους ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν ἱερουργίας ἀπολογεῖται πρότερον ἱερῶς πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀναβοῶν· ‘Σὺ εἶπας· τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν’”. *EH* III.3.12 441C-444A (92:2-14).

180. *EH* VII.3.10 565C (130:6-8).

181. “Εἶτα τῆς θεομιμήτου ταύτης ἱερουργίας ἄξιος αἰτήσας γενέσθαι καὶ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν Χριστὸν ἀφομοιώσει τὰ θεῖα τελέσαι καὶ διαδοῦναι πανάγνως καὶ τοὺς τῶν ἱερῶν μεθέξοντας ἱεροπρεπῶς μετασχεῖν... συμβολικῶς τὴν ἐνότητα πληθύνει καὶ διανέμει παναγεστάτην ἐν τούτοις ἱερουργίαν τελῶν”. *EH* III.3.12 444A (92:14-21).

182. *Ibid.* 444B (93:9-10).

matters sacredly accomplished, bringing the veiled gifts to sight, dividing their unity into many, and by means of the unity in the highest degree of the things distributed with those which in them come to pass, renders the participants communicants of them. For he sensibly delineates in these things, as in images, our spiritual life, leading into sight from the secrecy proper to the divine Jesus Christ [who], by means of his all perfect and unconfused Incarnation according to our mode of being, as a lover of mankind took form from us and went forth without alteration from the One which is his by nature into our divided existence, and through this beneficent philanthropy calls the race of men to communion with himself and the good things which are his, if indeed we be united to his most divine life through our assimilation... to it, and in this manner we shall be truly rendered communicants of God and of divine things... Having participated in and distributed the divine communion, he [the hierarch] finishes with all the sacred fullness of the Church in holy thanksgiving¹⁸³.

Is this an exemplarism pure and simple? To be sure, we find the anagogic function of the hierurgies, but that spiritual atomism – private virtue exercised as the result of a purely individual appreciation of “intelligible truths”¹⁸⁴ – to which an extreme exemplarism must lead remains quite foreign to Dionysius. We said above that with the ὑπ’ ὅψιν, echoed in such phrases as ἐμφαίνει and πρὸς τὸ ἐμφανές, we have arrived at the heart of the Dionysian vision. That heart or core is the very nature of symbol and icon: Christ embodied in our hierarchy. The mystery at the heart of things is the “union κατ’ ἄκρην” of the distributed material gifts with “the things which in them come to pass”, i.e., which are rendered visible, present. Those things are the “good things” proper to God, to Jesus. They are indeed Jesus himself, μετουσία ἑαυτοῦ. The ἀνάμνησις is a true re-collection of the Incarnation, and because this is the case, the σύναξις is a true “gathering” into Christ. We recall the progression noted above: the “things hymned”, the theurgies or Incarnation, are “brought to sight;” they are “brought to sight through the symbols;” and finally, Jesus Christ himself is brought to sight. The mystery is rendered present, visible, yet still awaiting the perfect revelation

183. “Ταῦτα τοῖς ἱερώς δρωμένοις ὁ ἱεράρχης ἐμφαίνει τὰ μὲν ἐγκεκαλυμμένα δῶρα πρὸς τὸ ἐμφανές ἄγων τὸ δὲ ἐνιαῖον αὐτῶν εἰς πολλὰ διαιρῶν καὶ τῇ τῶν διανεμομένων πρὸς τὰ ἐν οἷς γίγνεται κατ’ ἄκρην ἐνώσει κοινωνοὺς αὐτῶν ἀποτελῶν τοὺς μετέχοντας. Διαγράφει γὰρ ἐν τούτοις αἰσθητῶς ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἄγων Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν τὴν νοητὴν ἡμῶν ὡς ἐν εἰκόσι ζωὴν... φιλανθρωπῶς ἐξ ἡμῶν εἰδοποιούμενον καὶ πρὸς τὸ μεριστὸν ἡμῶν ἀναλλοιώτως ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν ἐνὸς προϊόντα καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀγαθουργοῦ ταύτης φιλανθρωπίας εἰς μετουσίαν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν οἰκείων ἀγαθῶν καλοῦντα τὸ ἀνθρώπειον φύλον, εἴπερ ἐνωθῶμεν αὐτοῦ τῇ θειοτάτῃ ζωῇ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἡμῶν κατὰ δύναμιν ἀφομοιώσει... μετασχὼν δὲ καὶ μεταδοὺς τῆς θεαρχικῆς κοινωνίας εἰς εὐχαριστίαν ἱερὰν καταλήγει μετὰ παντός τοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἱεροῦ πληρώματος”. *EH* III.3.13-14 444C-445A (93:11-24).

184. See Meyendorff, *Christ*, 79-80 and *Byz. Theol.*, 28.

and complete declaration of the eschaton¹⁸⁵. The stuff of our world reaches its highest point on the altar. It realizes the Incarnation, and it is the function of the “elect”, the “initiates”, to recognize the vision of the final reality toward which these types point and which, indeed, is present in them now: the time when Christ will be all in all. This is the sense of the ἀρχή to which we were directed at the beginning of the sacrament’s contemplation.

Recognition is the key because, bearing in mind the Dionysian vision as sketched so far, we may say that sacramental realism is in a sense presupposed. We are united through the sacraments to Christ. What we are called to do, and what is done by each according to capacity is to recognize, become aware of, the mystery that is accomplished. We therefore find Dionysius employing this very term, ἐπιγινώσκω (to recognize, become conscious of), when describing the thanksgiving of the ranks of clergy as “having recognized [ἐπιγνοῦσα] and hymned... the graces [χάριται] of the theurgies”¹⁸⁶, and in his remarks concluding this section:

‘Taste,’ say the Scriptures, ‘and see;’ for by the sacred initiation into the things divine the initiates will recognize their munificent graces, and by participation contemplating their most divine height and breadth, they will hymn the super-heavenly beneficences of the Thearchy¹⁸⁷.

One does not leave behind the physical elements of the sacraments in becoming truly initiated. We instead become more alive to the reality of grace informing them. It is now, at the altar and in Jesus, that we grow aware of the common image and reality that binds all together. He is “our most divine providence”¹⁸⁸, just as he is the meaning and action of the liturgy, the mystery of the altar, and the source of the sanctified soul’s deification.

e) The spiral motion

There is a final point with regard to the Eucharist. Just as this sacrament brings an illumination at once revealing and making Christ present, so the action

185. Certainly, Dionysius’ notion is not yet adequate to the distinction between symbol and Eucharist drawn at Nicea II (see Meyendorff, *Byz. Theol.*, 203-204). Nonetheless, his cannot be reduced to a purely symbolological interpretation. The Eucharist for him differs supremely in degree, if not in kind, from the other symbols proper to our hierarchy.

186. *EH* III.3.15 445B (94:12-13); for other uses of the verb and its related noun, see: *CH* IX.3 260C (38:1-3); IX.4 261C (39:13-15); XIII.3 301C (45:18-21); *EH* II.2.1 393A (76:1-2); II.3.2 397C (74:5-7); II.3.4 400B (75:10-13); II.3.8 404C (78:16-19) esp.; III.3.15 445C (94:18-22); IV.3.8 481B (101:3-4); and VII.3.6 561B (126:21).

187. “Γεύσασθε” δέ φησι τὰ λόγια ‘καὶ ἴδετε’. Τῇ γὰρ ἱερᾷ τῶν θεῶν μῆσει τὰς μεγαλοδώρας αὐτῶν οἱ μουσούμενοι χάριτας ἐπιγνώσονται καὶ τὸ θεϊότατον αὐτῶν ὕψος καὶ μέγεθος ἐν τῇ μεθέξει πανιέρως ἐποπτεύοντες τὰς ὑπερουρανίας εὐχαρίστως ὑμνήσουσι τῆς θεαρχίας ἀγαθουργίας. *EH* III.3.15 445C (94:17-22).

188. *EH* III.3.11 and III.3.12 441A and C (91:8-10 and 92:6-7).

or “spiritual motion” to be associated with it is that of the spiral. We begin at the altar and follow the bishop out as he moves to include the whole of the Church in his censuring, and then as he returns to the altar. The instruction of “those being purified” follows with the readings from Scripture and the outlining of the saving acts. With the Creed and offertory we enter on a second cycle that concentrates on the altar and sanctuary area: the recalling of the dead, the kiss revealing the unity of the purified and enlightened laity together with the clergy. We move further up the scale with the lustration, and concentrate exclusively on the clergy around the altar. Finally we are present at the great recollection of the Incarnation and the consecration effected by the hierarch, standing alone before the altar, followed by his communion. The distribution of the consecrated gifts moves down from him to the clergy and then to the laity. The circle of motion beginning and ending at the altar grows tighter with each step, and it culminates in the prayer of the bishop, called to a ministry ὑπὲρ αὐτόν, the ὑπ’ ὅψιν of the *anaphora*. At every stage the altar remains the point where we both begin and conclude.

Dionysius’ θεωρία of the sacrament is at once a turning around and a gathering into that unique point, precisely a spiral. It is therefore also an image of the sanctified human intelligence both circling about, and increasingly drawn into, the mystery of God – as into the “still point” of the poet¹⁸⁹. In as much as it is an image, so it is as well a reality. Contemplating the icon of the σύναξις, and sharing the bread and wine, we are called upon to become aware, according to our ability and degree of holiness, of a reality and presence at once in our midst yet transcending our present sensibilities: Christ, the συμβολή of human and divine. The “validity” of the Eucharist is therefore not denied, rather the intuition of the presence and activities of God (and of the angels) begins and ends at and on the altar. These activities flood the whole complex of sacred actions centered upon the altar, and emanate from it with the light of the world to come.

3. The sacred Chrism: union

a) The circular mode

In the sacrament of Chrism we find Dionysius dwelling on the image of union or perfection itself¹⁹⁰, and thus upon the “circular” mode of spiritual motion. This assertion is borne out by considering the locus of this sacrament’s action. Unlike

189. “At the still point of the turning world...
there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement.
And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered.
Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline, except for the still point
there would be no dance”.

T. S. Elliot, “Burnt Norton” II, *The Four Quartets* (New York: 1973) 16-17.

190. See Stiglmayr, “Die Lehre”, 283-290 and 291.

Baptism, which begins “outside” and concludes before the sanctuary, or the Eucharist, which moves from the altar to embrace the whole Church in a series, one might almost say, of “pulses”, the sacrament of the Chrism is confined to the space behind the veils of the sanctuary, and it is open alone to the contemplation of the clergy gathered around the altar. There is very little action at all by way of actual movement. Nothing obvious happens. Rather, the holy oil is covered with its twelve veils, placed upon the altar by the bishop, and we are asked to contemplate the vessel, the altar, the bishop before the altar, and the priests surrounding it. Yet in this stillness we in fact discover the recapitulation and crown of all that has gone before, exactly that gathering-into-itself and attachment to union that Dionysius describes in the “circular mode” of the soul’s motion¹⁹¹.

b) The threefold ascents of the clergy

The purified orders of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy are scarcely mentioned at all, being dismissed after the reading of the Scripture¹⁹². For the laity, only the vision or sight of the veiled mysteries is permitted¹⁹³. The heart of the mystery, indeed, the subject of the action here, is the order of the “all holy”, the clergy.

It is with the latter, and with their aptitude for beatitude, that Dionysius is preoccupied in the first four paragraphs of his *θεωρία*. In the first¹⁹⁴, rather than the exhortations to perfect purity such as the one accompanying the explanation of lustration, we are given a statement concerning the purity of those who gaze directly on the mystery of the altar. Employing the metaphor of the artist revealing the archetype in the image, dear to Plotinus¹⁹⁵ he writes that since

the secret and inconceivably sweet-smelling beauties of God are undefiled, they appear indeed only to the spiritual who, according to their virtue, are able to produce the uniform images incorruptible in their souls¹⁹⁶.

The veils about the perfumed oil suggest, first, the modesty of holy virtue and of its possessors¹⁹⁷ who have conformed themselves to the “most beautiful imitation [τὸ κάλλιστον μίμημα]”¹⁹⁸, the *θεομίμητον* in other words. Through their “persistent and unflinching contemplation”, the beholders of the *ἀρχέτυπος νόησις* are likenesses of the divine¹⁹⁹:

191. *DN* IV.9 705A (153:10-16).

192. *EH* IV.2 473A (95:9-12).

193. *EH* IV.3.2 476C (97:17-18).

194. *EH* IV.3.1 473B-476B (95:19-97:3).

195. See *Enn.* I.9.9.

196. “... αἱ τοῦ Θεοῦ κρυφαὶ ὑπὲρ νοῦν εὐώδεις εὐπρέπειαὶ καὶ νοητῶς ἐμφαίνονται μόνους τοῖς νοεροῖς ὁμοειδεῖς ἔχειν ἐθέλουσαι τὰς κατ’ ἀρετὴν ἐν ψυχαῖς ἀπαρραφθάρτους εἰκόνας”. *EH* IV.3.1 473B (95:24-96:2).

197. *Ibid.* (95:19-23).

198. *Ibid.* (96:2-5).

199. *Ibid.* 473D (96:16-18).

Wherefore... neither are they lovers of things that vainly seem good and just, but of those which truly are, nor do they look for the glory which is senselessly blessed by the many, but instead, judging in theomimetic manner the good or ill in itself, they are divine images of the most divine sweet savor²⁰⁰.

Following purification, we move to the illumination of the clergy. Being true images of the divine “sweet savor” through their exercise of virtue and enlightened discrimination and imitators thus of God, it is to these “inspired ones” that “the ray of the holy things... shines purely and without intermediary [ἀμέσως], perfuming their spiritual perceptions [νοεραὶ ἀντιλήψεις] in unveiled manner”²⁰¹. Theirs is the illumination (here the “visible consecration of the myron”) for which the laity are as yet incapable. And theirs, too, the call to recognize beneath the visible “the more divine beauty... the blessed radiance clearly shining, and filling us with the savor revealed to the spiritual”²⁰².

Dionysius follows this with a paragraph stating the comparable rank (ὁμοταγῇ) and activity of the myron with the Eucharist, not an untraditional position in Syrian Christian circles²⁰³. It, too, is the image, and presence, of the last and highest of the triple work of hierarchy and perfection. The bishops and priests within the sanctuary, both purified and illumined, are also called upon to reveal perfection. Just as the myron, a composite of material perfumes, lends its sweetness to those who partake of it²⁰⁴, so

in analogical fashion might one say also that our spiritual powers, being unalterably disposed against the falling-away into evil, and by the natural strengthening of the critical [faculty] in us, come into perception of the divine sweet savor and are filled full of holy joy and most divine nourishment in accordance with the theurgic degrees and the corresponding conversion of the mind to the divine²⁰⁵.

200. “Ὅθεν... οὐδὲ τῶν δοκούντων καλῶν καὶ δικαίων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων ἐρωσιν οὐδὲ πρὸς δόξαν ὀρώσι τὴν ὑπὸ πλήθους ἀλόγως μακαριζομένην, ἀλλὰ τὸ καλὸν ἢ χειρόν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ θεομιμήτως κρίναντες ἀγάλματα θεῖα τῆς θεαρχικωτάτης εἰσὶν εὐωδίας...”. *EH* IV.3.1 476A (96:20-97:1).

201. *EH* IV.3.2 476BC (97:12-15).

202. *Ibid.* (97:6-8).

203. See Strothmann, *Die Myronweihe*, esp. liii-lx. Indeed, the exaltation of the oil of anointing in Syriac Christianity long antedates the controversies over Chalcedon. See, for example, Ephrem Syrus on this subject in Chapter IX below, 367-368, though in earlier Syriac writers it is primarily attached to the person of the Holy Spirit and not, as here in Dionysius (and his Syrian contemporaries), to the divinity of Jesus Christ. See below, note 208.

204. *EH* IV.3.4 477C (98:24-26).

205. “... ἀναλόγως ἂν τις φαίη καὶ τὰς νοερὰς ἡμῶν δυνάμεις πρὸς τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ χειρόν ὕφεσιν ἀπαραφθάρτως διακειμένας ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν κριτικοῦ φυσικῇ ῥώσει κατὰ τὰ θεουργικὰ μέτρα καὶ τὴν κατάλληλον τοῦ νοὸς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἐπιστροφὴν ἐν ἀντιλήψει τῆς θεαρχικῆς εὐωδίας γίνεσθαι καὶ εὐπαθείας ἱεράς πληροῦσθαι καὶ θειοτάτης τροφῆς”. *Ibid.*, 477D-480A (99:3-8).

With the term τροφή we arrive at the term of the ascent, the last phase of the process that we saw Dionysius define at the beginning of the *EH* as θέωσις: “the inspired participation of the uniform perfection, the feast of vision spiritually feeding [τρέφουσα]... everyone who stretches up to it”²⁰⁶. We thus arrive as well at him who is the source of deification: “and we are persuaded that it is the most divine Jesus who is the super-essential fragrance filling our spiritual being [τὸ νοερόν] with spiritual distributions of divine delight”²⁰⁷, and so finally to the recognition that the “symbolic combination of the myron depicts Jesus himself, who is the font and bliss of all divine and fragrant perceptions”²⁰⁸. Jesus is the “sweet savor imprinting itself on its true images”, the “spiritual food” of the deified, and therefore both the “archetypal νόησις informing the sacrament and the power enabling the θεομίμητον. Purified, illumined, and perfected (ὡς ἐφικτόν), the clergy about the altar are ravished by his sweetness, contemplate his light, and so are rendered imitators of his Providence.

c) The mirror of the angels

Dionysius, having sketched the virtues of the clergy, moves in the succeeding paragraphs²⁰⁹ to a consideration of the Celestial Hierarchy, specifically the order of the Seraphim. They, too, are established “around Jesus”, and their “sacred γνῶσις”, both “tireless... and unceasingly in possession of divine love”, and “lying above every evil and forgetfulness”, gives rise in them both to perpetual thanksgiving (an eternal Eucharist) and to the gift of their vision to those subordinate to them in a manner which at once hides, “in fashion undefiled, their supreme vision and participation”, and distributes it in a manner “analogous” to the capacity of their dependents in the hierarchy²¹⁰. This is the vision of perfection that has been mediated to us through “sensible images” in the Scripture and which, as Dionysius remarks to his “Timothy”,

we have shown to your spiritual eyes... since indeed those who now surround in holy fashion the hierarch represent for us in brief that supreme order [the Seraphim] itself, and now with immaterial eyes we shall see their most deiform splendor²¹¹.

206. *EH* I.3 376A (66:14-19).

207. *EH* IV.3.4 477C (98:26-99:1).

208. *Ibid.*, 480A (99:8-10). See again Strothman, *Myronweihe*, esp. lx: the consecration of the myron “ist ein Bekenntniss zur monophysitischen Christologie: wie nämlich bei der Mischung der Öl der Duft der kleinen Menge des Balsam-Öls die grössere Menge der gerechlohn Oliven-Öls überdeckt, so durchdringt die Gottheit Christi die Menschheit Jesu”.

209. *EH* IV.3.5-10 480B-484A (99:15-102:4).

210. *EH* IV.3.5 480BC (99:15-100:5).

211. “... τοῖς σοῖς νοεροῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ὑπεδείξαμεν... ἐπειδὴ καὶ νῦν οἱ τὸν ἱεράρχην ἱερῶς περιστῶτες αὐτὴν ἡμῖν ἐκείνην ἀποτυποῦσι τὴν ὑπερτάτην διακόσμησιν, ἐν ἐπιτομῇ καὶ νῦν ἀυλοτάταυς ὄψει τὴν θεοειδεστάτην αὐτῶν ἀγλαΐαν ὀψόμεθα”. *EH* IV.3.6 480D (100:9-12).

The Seraphim are the models for the clergy gathered around the altar. They are, indeed, more than simply models, but are actually present as well, the intelligible world of created beings invisibly among us – or, rather, visibly so long as we look with “immaterial eyes”²¹². Our liturgy is at one with theirs, and it is called upon to become transparent to theirs in proportion to our capacity for vision, for grace. The latter term brings us again to the one reality pervading, filling, and joining both hierarchies.

d) Jesus, our bond and consecration

Dionysius moves from consideration of the angelic ranks to their participation in Jesus’ economy of salvation²¹³. Following our author, we descend thus with Christ into our humanity and, with him in the baptismal waters blessed by the myron, into his saving death and Resurrection²¹⁴. From the Seraphim about the Presence to the tomb and death, embraced within a single paragraph, is a displacement of prodigious dimensions. Linking both, bond of the visible and invisible worlds, is the person of Jesus. Following the discussion of the clergy, then of the Seraphim, and finally of the Incarnation, we find a final “settling”, a “descent” that is in fact a coalescence, a resolution and coming together:

Wherefore the tradition of sacred symbols, in the consecration of the divine myron, renders the Seraphim present [to us], recognizing as unchanged and outlining Christ in his true and complete becoming man as we²¹⁵.

The sacrament of the Chrism completes the movement towards the altar and up to God that we began with baptism, and it reveals that movement to have been a circle. What is revealed at the end of the journey we have traced from ignorance to knowledge, from sin to purification, from darkness to light, from imperfection to perfection, from earth to the courts of heaven, proves to have been present from the beginning. It is Christ who is the center, circumference, and all within. He is “our most divine altar”²¹⁶. Our sanctification, our union with the heavenly powers such that we may contemplate the Seraphim in earthly symbols, the bond of heaven and earth, rests finally on and proceeds from the sacrifice of the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection, on what Dionysius, “quoting” his masters, calls the “sacrament” or “initiation [τελετή] of God;” “for it is his sacrament to be

212. Compare *CH* 121C (18:14-17) and 124A (9:8-15) with *EH* 372AB (64:2-14), and see Stiglmayr, “Die Engellehre des sog. Dionysius Aropagita” *Compte rendu du 4ème Congrès scientifique des Catholiques* (Fribourg: 1898) 406.

213. *EH* IV.3.10 484A (101:19-102:4).

214. *Ibid.* 484B (102:8-16).

215. “Ὅθεν ἡ τῶν ἱερῶν παράδοσις ἀγιαζομένῳ τῷ θείῳ μύρῳ τοὺς Σεραφίμ περι-
ίστησιν ἀπαράλλακτον εἰδυῖα καὶ διαγράφουσα τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν τῇ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὀλικῇ πρὸς
ἀλήθειαν ἐνανθρωπήσει”. *Ibid.* 484A (102:1-4).

216. *EH* IV.3.12 484D (103:4-5 and 7-8).

sanctified for us in a manner proper to men, and in divine fashion both to consecrate all things and to sanctify the consecrated"²¹⁷. Our union, ἔνωσις, and meditation on that union is nothing more nor less than our sharing here and now in Christ, in the unique sacrament of his economy made present to us in Baptism, Eucharist, and the consecrating oil. Sharing in that sacrament or presence, we become sharers in the liturgy of the angels and are gathered with them about the throne of God to echo their thanksgiving with the praise which, as Dionysius tells us on concluding his treatment of the sacraments, properly befits the works of God²¹⁸.

Summary: We have traced the ascent that began outside the gates of the Church and concluded within the sanctuary veils around the altar. We began in the clamor and brokenness of the fallen world and concluded with the timeless liturgy of the Seraphim. We have discovered in all three of the mysteries, in the "direct" thrust of the Baptismal entry and re-birth, in the "spiral" of the Eucharist gathering all up and into itself, and in the still "circle" of contemplation at the myron's consecration, that the Providence which is the source, model, active power, and goal of these sacraments is one, moreover, that this one Providence is revealed in the person and economy – the "theurgies" – of Jesus Christ. Through and in the unique sacrament of Jesus the Christian is purified, by it is illumined, and by it again is perfected and made a concelebrant of the angels.

D. FROM THE ALTAR TO THE DOORS

1. Ministers and ministered

a) The structure

We remember that we are required to become like God through active imitation of him. Conversion requires procession, and to rise to the likeness of light means necessarily that one must oneself become a light to others. It is not by accident that our author led us to a consideration of the heavenly choirs at the conclusion of the consecration of the myron. Gathered about the Presence and simultaneously the enlighteners of those below them, the Seraphim are the models of our clergy who, from meditation on the mystery of the altar, turn to purify, illumine, and perfect those below them. Thus the structure of the treatise, having taken us up to the summits of contemplation, the altar, now, in accordance with the "divine law"²¹⁹, obliges us to retrace our steps back and down the ladder of ascents. From the altar, illumined, we proceed to the doors, and the light that we have traced to its source at the altar is, in the following chapters, discussed in its outward streaming, its radiance at once diminishing according to the degree of each order's participation in it, yet caught and revealed to the contemplative gaze

217. *Ibid.* 485 A (103:16-18).

218. *Ibid.* 485 B (103:19-104:2).

219. *EHV*.1.4 504 C (106:24-25).

in the operations of purification, illumination and perfection: first and foremost in the priestly orders whose actions body it forth – “the perfecting icons of the thearchic power”²²⁰ – and then as received and contemplated by the laity, in particular by the monastic order²²¹. We find a clearly outlined ladder of functions wherein the terms τάξις or διακόσμησις correspond to the English “rank”²²². Unlike the angels’ hierarchy, wherein each rank is dependent upon the one immediately above it, in our own hierarchy there is a clear division²²³ between the initiating or priestly ranks and those which are subject, both individually and as group, to the former’s ministrations. This same order, however, leads us to confront what is perhaps *the* problem of the Dionysian hierarchies.

b) Clericalism or charismaticism?

John Meyendorff understands the Dionysian hierarchy as either a structure of ranks of “magical efficacy”, or else as “charismatic”, i.e., with the bishops corresponding to the Evagrian *illuminati* transposed, as it were, onto the sacerdotal ladder²²⁴. While there is indeed something to be said for an Evagrian connection here²²⁵, such a tidy dismissal of what Roques has referred to in another context²²⁶ as the Dionysian “antinomies” is neither just nor helpful. The answer is instead in Dionysius’ presentation of our hierarchy as an ideal form, a presentation that is linked to his idea of the hierarchy as icon. The difficulty lies largely in his failure to distinguish clearly the function of this icon as the present communication of grace from its role as pointer to a future, eschatological reality. We shall take up the latter in connection with the following chapter. Let us first consider the arguments for and against the clerical/charismatic interpretation.

i) Arguments for a clerical/charismatic interpretation

Three aspects of Dionysius’ treatment of our hierarchy appear to argue for this interpretation. The first is the apparent and often repeated²²⁷ legalism of the Areopagite: “the lesser are incapable of leaping over to the greater, in addition to its being contrary to the divine decree [μηδὲ θεμιτὸν] for them to attempt such an imposture”²²⁸. Again, the monk is on several occasions²²⁹ specifically excluded

220. *EH* V.1.5 505B (107:21-22).

221. *EH* VI.1.3 532D (115:4-15).

222. See Roques on the rough equivalence of τάξις/διάκοσμος *L’Univers*, 56.

223. For example, as described in *EH* V.1 (104:3-10).

224. See *Christ*, 78-79 and 82-83.

225. See our discussion in Chapter VIII, 298-299, as well as in Chapter IX, 356-359, on the “Messalians”.

226. “Éléments pour une théologie de l’état monastique selon Denys l’Aréopagite” *TVM* (1961) 287.

227. See our discussion of θεσμός in Chapter III above, 124-127.

228. *EH* V.1.7 508C (109:18-20).

229. *EH* VI.1.3 533A, and VI.3.1 533C (116:20-23 and 117:17-22).

from priestly functions, or, most explicitly in the *Epistle* to the erring Demophilus, directly forbidden and roundly blasted for having so presumed²³⁰. As Roques notes: “rien n’habille le moine pour le moindre fonction dans l’église; il n’y fait en aucune façon figure de chef, mais seulement de fidèle... du suivant [ὁπαδός]”²³¹. The demarcation of function, coupled with a vocabulary that frequently uses terms such as “superiors”, “inferiors”, etc.²³² certainly appears to weigh heavily towards a “yes”. Secondly, there is the very nature of the lay and priestly ranks as an icon, as the collective image of the Celestial Hierarchy and the divine energies, and therefore as potentially transparent to that which it represents, i.e., the providential object of our contemplation. The legalism is thus strict in order that “the order [διακόσμησις] of our hierarchy” be shown as definitely rejecting “the disordered [ἄτακτον] and confused”, while “showing forth in the proportions of its ranks that which is decorous, ordered and steadfast”²³³, qualities that in turn point to our hierarchy as revealing and preserving “in human manner” the dispositions of the Celestial Hierarchy²³⁴, and so as finally declarative of the “Thearchy which first purifies, then illumines, then perfects”²³⁵. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is the “hierarchic icon of divine things”²³⁶. Seemingly linking yet more firmly the persons of those occupying the rungs of the hierarchic ladder to their iconic roles we discover, thirdly, that Dionysius’ portrait of the Church appears to offer little room for the principle of *ex opere operato*²³⁷. This appears in his discussion of prayer for the dead²³⁸ wherein he declares that the bishop, as “interpreter of the divine justice”²³⁹, “would never seek that which is unpleasing to God... [i.e. pray for a sinner] because he would stray in this from the imperative order”. Even more emphatic are his declarations in *Epistle VIII*²⁴⁰.

230. *Ep. VIII.1* 1089B-1092A (177:10-180:3).

231. “L’état monastique”, 298.

232. For the frequency of such terms as, for example, δεύτεροι and πρώτοι, see *Indices*, 42 and 124. See also Evagrius’ use of the same vocabulary in Chapter VIII below, 325 and note 42.

233. *EH V.1.1* 500D (104:6-10).

234. *EH VI.3.5* 536D-537A (119:12-15).

235. *EH V.1.7* 508CD-509A (109:21-110:5).

236. *Ibid.* (110:2).

237. See Roques, *L’Univers*, 296-297, and Stiglmayr, “Die Lehre”, 295-296, but also von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, 177-178.

238. *EH VII.3.6-7* 560C-564D (125:24-129:10).

239. *Ibid.* 7 (128:4-5 and 127:16-17). For this expression in relation to the bishop, see also *CH XII.2* 293A (43:9-11).

240. The language in *Ep. VIII.2* 1092BC (180.12-181.9) is indeed much stronger. “Nearness” to the altar signifies not only physical (τοπικῶς) nearness to God, but degrees of “God-receptivity” (θεοδόχος ἐπιτηδειότης); thus, “if the priestly order is illuminative [φωτιστική], he has entirely fallen away from the priestly order and virtue who is not illumined... Such a one is not a priest... but a hostile element, a deceiver, an entrapper of himself and a wolf set against the holy people”.

ii) *Arguments against a clerical/charismatic interpretation*

Let us consider again the sense of “office” or “function” as revealed in the highest of their respective orders – laity and clergy – the monk and the hierarch. Oppenheim and, following him, Roques²⁴¹ have noted the parallelism between monastic tonsure and Baptism present in Dionysius’ account of the former. We might also observe a certain, as it were, sacramental intensification. The monk not only rejects the bad for the good as does the neophyte, but, leaving behind “fantasy” as well, strives for the “perfect philosophy”, the “science of the unifying commandments”²⁴² – probably a reference to the evangelical precept of love. So, too, his tonsure is sealed with the Eucharist, the κεφάλαιον of the hierarchy²⁴³, which he now approaches with an intensified knowledge (θεία γνῶσις) as compared to the rest of the laity²⁴⁴. The monk continues, as Roques notes²⁴⁵, the movement from the doors to the altar, from West to East, as is revealed (an apparent Dionysian addition) through his being stationed near or next to the “gates of the sanctuary”²⁴⁶. Yet he remains a member of the initiated orders, subordinate to the clergy and, although taught directly by the bishop and so led by the latter’s “science... into most perfect perfection”²⁴⁷, he remains nonetheless one who is led, a “follower”. Does this mean that even the monk cannot participate directly in the mystical union? Such does not appear to be the case. The monk’s activity, in Roques’ words, is “strictement intérieur, consiste à retrouver la stable et sainte unité de la monade”²⁴⁸. He is to remain in himself, “in a uniform [μοναδική] and holy στάσις”²⁴⁹. Recalling the three modes of spiritual motion and applying them to each of the initiated orders: if the “motion” of the neophytes is primarily “direct” and equivalent to purification, while that of the baptized laity is “spiral” and signifies the illumination they receive from their presence at the sacraments,

241. P. Oppenheim, “Mönchweihe und Taufritus. Ein Commentar zur Auslegung bei Dionysius der Areopagiten” *Miscellanea Liturgica* (1948) 259-282; and Roques’ “L’état monastique”, 286-296.

242. *EH* VI.3.2 533D (117:23-25).

243. *EH* VI.3.5 536C (119:3-4); and see Oppenheim, “Mönchweihe und Taufritus”, 280.

244. *Ibid.* 536CD (119:4-7).

245. “L’état monastique”, 295-296.

246. *Ep.* VIII.1 1088D-1089A (176:12-177:1). Indeed, Dionysius’ whole treatment of monastic tonsure is innovative, particularly his equation of it with baptism. His effort is in fact to integrate the monks thus into the structure of the visible Church, very likely in response to the dangers threatening the latter and coming primarily from the monastic enthusiasts (“Messalians”) active still in the late fifth century, as well as the implications of Evagrian notions. See below, Chapters VIII, 319-322, and IX, 355-359, for these points as well as for Dionysius’ simultaneous attachment in some of his apparent “innovations” to traditional elements in Syrian Christianity. The physical placement of the ascetics is one such element.

247. *EH* VI.1.3 532D (116:13-14).

248. “État monastique”, 298.

249. *EH* VI.1.3 533C (117:20).

then the “motion” of the monks is representative of the “circular” mode, the “motion” or activity proper to mystical union, and his role or function is thus to stand as representative of the summit of contemplative – which is here also to say passive – activity²⁵⁰.

What of the bishop? Does he in fact deliver or mediate the *ένωσις*? Here it might be helpful to take up the suggestions offered by Orrieux²⁵¹. The latter sees the function of Dionysius’ “hierarchy” rooted in the ecclesiastical practice – and even partially the vocabulary²⁵² – of our author’s era. The function of the bishop’s “perfecting” lies in his explanation (catechetical or mystagogical lectures) of the “symbols” which the neophytes are seeing for the first time, and in the continued explication of doctrine and preaching directed toward the laity²⁵³. A similar teaching program, on an intensified scale, could thus be envisioned for the monks. The extreme single-mindedness required of their “order”, always a group prone to excesses, might also explain the rigor of Dionysius’ insistence on the due order of the hierarchy in his *Epistle to Demophilus*. We might then read the *έπιστήμη* of the hierarchy as equivalent to the teaching office that was traditionally held to be the peculiar duty of the episcopacy. Transmission of knowledge, rather let us say the magisterium, is limited to the hierarchy and, through him, to his clergy. He, and through him his clergy, alone have the right authoritatively to interpret. The *visio Dei*, however, as an experience would be open to others. Thus we might justify Professor Armstrong’s understanding of the Areopagite as “a good churchman, who likes to think of God’s gifts being distributed decently and in order in heaven and on earth”, and who therefore sees to it to stress “that superiors will have their proper function of loving care for their inferiors and transmit the gifts which they have received to them”, while “the inferiors will have the proper attitude of receptive humility”²⁵⁴.

Lastly, in connection with the stress on charity, we might view the hierarchy, at the peak of the initiators into the mysteries, as parallel to the monk at the peak of the initiated. The hierarchy stands at the summit of the active side or facet of contemplation, of *θεομίμησις*, while the monk incarnates the passive virtues. All of the active virtue (*δύναμις*) of the hierarchy rests in the bishop – together, of course, with all of its knowledge or *έπιστήμη*²⁵⁵.

250. Note that *Epistles* I and II, on *άγνωση* and *σκότος*, are addressed to monks.

251. L. M. Orrieux, “L’Évêque ‘perfectior’ selon le Ps.-Denys”, in *L’Évêque dans l’Église du Christ* (1962) 237-242.

252. *Ibid.*, 237-238. Orrieux cites particularly the *Apostolic Constitutions* (PG I, 189, 801-805 and 1149-1153) as paralleling Dionysius in 165A, 377A, 512B-513A, and our author’s stress on each order of the hierarchy obeying its proper limits.

253. *Ibid.* 239-242.

254. “Negative Theology”, 183-184.

255. For example, *EH* V.3.7 513C (113:18-20); but, see *Ep.* VIII.1 1085Cff (173:11-175:13) where Demophilus is bidden to look directly to Jesus for both his example of charity and his illumination.

iii) *An abiding ambiguity*

Yet this explanation still remains partial. Much as we would like to endorse Armstrong and Orrieux with respect to these matters, we are nonetheless confronted by texts which present the bishop as, both ex officio and personally it seems, on a higher level of perfection than everyone else – in “virtue” and in “knowledge”. We believe that Dionysius is, in part, just what Armstrong says he is, but it remains to be said that the latter’s dismissal of hierarchy as simply “good church order” fails to meet two of our requirements. We cannot, first of all, use it to reply to such texts as we encounter in, for example, *Epistle VIII*: “each order [διακόμησις] of those about God [περὶ Θεόν] is more deiform than (the one) which is further distant, and both more illumined and more illumining are those that are closer to the true light”²⁵⁶, an equation that would clearly place the priestly orders about the altar itself on a higher level, in every sense, than any of the lay ranks.

Are we left with Meyendorff’s choice: magic or charismaticism? While we would choose the former as closer to our author’s mind²⁵⁷ if forced, we feel that the “antinomies” uncovered by Roques in his examination of Dionysius’ account of the monastic estate²⁵⁸ to be closer to the Dionysian problem. They are: “l’orientation [du moine] à peu près exclusivement vertical (mais)... son obligation de service dans l’église: la primauté de Christ avec la primauté de l’Un; l’espèce de juridisme inhérent aux cadres et aux médiations hiérarchiques avec le ‘pneumatisme’ que représentent les exigences de l’union mystique”. The presence, however muted by the arguments of Orrieux and Armstrong, of these antinomies brings us to the second of our requirements and to the key of the Dionysian tensions regarding the orders, as it were, of law and of grace. The Areopagite has been compelled, both by the intent or thrust of his vision and the very mode or style with which he has chosen to clothe that vision²⁵⁹, to present his readers with a markedly – if not extraordinarily – idealized picture of the Church structure and functioning. It is this idealization that, allowing for the ambiguities noted above, requires the virtual identification of law and grace, of office and person, in as much as the latter two “orders” are both expressed by the single “order” (τάξις) of hierarchy. The τάξις of our (or any) hierarchy is, we have seen, more than simply the mode ordained for the orderly transfer of information. It is as well the symbol, icon, or revelation of the very structures of grace. When looking toward the altar of the Church, we are called upon to do more than consider the physical presence of the sacraments, clergy and faithful. We are ultimately asked to discern in these symbols, in the order of their arrangement and in the sequence of the transmission of knowledge about them, the presence of Christ, the stable ranks of the angels,

256. *Ep. VIII.2* 1092B (180:12-15).

257. See Chapter VIII, esp. 340-341.

258. Roques, “État monastique”, 313.

259. Koch, *Beziehungen*, 92-97.

the eternal outflowings of the divine powers, and ourselves. It is in order, we believe, to make this iconic vision clear, to give it exclusive prominence, that Dionysius has chosen his particular – indeed, peculiar – mode of presentation, a mode which excludes nearly all concern for detail fine or otherwise, and avoids any adjustments such as might be required by the intrusions of the actual; for example, the simple fact that not all (rather few, in fact) bishops are “holy”. Everything and everyone must fit within the picture.

If the orders of law and grace are completely identical, then this would point to another grave problem in Dionysius’ presentation. To use the language of the Biblical critics, he would be preaching a completely “realized eschatology:” all is now as it should and will always be. Hornus’ judgment of Dionysius’ eschatological passages would then be entirely justified: “C’est là une donnée chrétien totalement étrangère à la structure générale du monde dionysien, et plaquée par dessus son système philosophique comme une affirmation de la foi”²⁶⁰. This is not the case, however. But in order to prove our contention, we must turn to a consideration of Chapter VII of the *EH*.

2. The mystery of burial: once again outside the doors; Dionysius’ eschatology

In light of what we have said up to this point and in view of Hornus’ opinion (which is far from a lonely one) we must ask first of Dionysius’ eschatology if it is truly present; secondly, what he says it to be; and, thirdly, what possible place it can have within his system.

a) Formally correct

The texts leave us in no doubt as to the affirmation, at least pro forma, of the Resurrection and traditional Christian doctrine concerning it. We have already mentioned two references to the Christian hope appearing in the *DN*. Once in the treatise’s “Introduction” in connection with the economy of symbols as a feature of this age²⁶¹, and again in the sixth Chapter, on “Life”²⁶² mentioning the promise to transfer “our whole selves, both... souls and the bodies linked to them, to all-perfect life and immortality”. A final reference to the Resurrection in the *DN* occurs in the chapter devoted to “Eternity” and time²⁶³, wherein Dionysius remarks that, whereas “here below [ἐνθάδε] the theology [Scripture] says we are bound by time [κατὰ χρόνον ὀριζόμενον], [we shall have] participation in eternity when we have attained to the eternity which is incorruptible and ever the same”. Elsewhere, we discover in *Epistles* VIII and IX²⁶⁴ two references, the former being to rewards and punishments in the future life, and the other, lengthier,

260. “Réflexions”, 54, note 54.

261. *DN* I.4 592C (114:1-115:8).

262. *DN* VI.2 856D (192:1-5).

263. *DN* X.3 937D (216:11-13).

264. *Ep.* VIII.5 1097AB (187:8-188:6), and IX.5 1112D-1113A (205:8-206:7).

to the royal banquet [συμπόσια] where the King himself, Jesus, will serve his guests. Half the references are, however, to be found within the *EH* and of these, with one exception²⁶⁵, the majority are in turn concentrated in Chapter VII, whose first two paragraphs²⁶⁶ provide us with Dionysius' most complete statement.

In order to find what the Christian hope is not, we look to the second paragraph of the chapter²⁶⁷ where Dionysius, writing against the ἀντεροί, lists four unacceptable options. The Resurrection is not: 1) non-existence (ἀνυπαρξία); 2) the severance or permanent "liberation" of the soul from an embodied state which is fundamentally alien (ἀνάρμωστον) to it; 3) the taking-on of another body; 4) an exact repetition of the conditions of the present state of embodied existence, including the need for food and drink. Positively, then, Dionysius argues for a life after death that will be "according to the Scriptural promises". This life will entail a resurrection (ἀνάστασις) and therefore an embodied state. Moreover, the resurrection body will be the same body that had been linked to the soul (ὁμόζυγον) and fought the latter's battle together with it (συναθλήσαν), and which has therefore been "co-inscribed [συναπογραφέν]" with it in the Kingdom. As he notes below, "our life in Christ has already begun"²⁶⁸. We have already "become members [μέλη]" of Christ²⁶⁹. The body, though, will be changed. It will share in the soul's "transition... to an all-perfect life and incorruption"²⁷⁰. The vision of the Resurrection as Dionysius depicts it is therefore fully traditional, reminiscent indeed of the eschaton as depicted by St. Paul in, for example, I Cor 15.

b) Consistent with the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

Traditional, to be sure, but we must next ask if it is at all Dionysian. Does his eschatology play any logical role in his overall vision, or has our author simply tacked it on to the *EH*, and elsewhere, in obedience to the demands of orthodoxy? Looking first to the structure itself, primarily literary, of the *EH*, we feel enabled to say that this doctrine is not a *Fremdkörper*²⁷¹. On the contrary, it is implicit in the treatise's construction and intent. The fairly long chapter (nine full columns, certainly rather a good deal to devote to the funeral rite were it not felt to be important) comes as the required conclusion to the movement that began with the convert's first steps toward the Church doors. As we think indicated by the discussion on the angels in the final paragraphs of Chapter VI²⁷², it is moreover a conclusion that looks forward to a resolution beyond the confines of the present age.

265. *EH* III.3.9 437BC (88:22-89:10).

266. *EH* VII.1.1-2 556A (120:13-122:11); elsewhere: VII.3.1 557AB (123:16-124:7) and VII.3.9 565B (129:23-130:5).

267. *EH* VII.1.2 553B-556A (121:10-122:11).

268. *Ibid.* 553C (121:13-14).

269. *EH* VII.1.1 553B (121:5-7).

270. *DN* VI.2 856D (192:2-3).

271. *Brons, Gott u.S.*, 3.

272. *EH* VI.3.5-6 537A-537C (119:13-120:12).

If the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is intended to cover and to consecrate all of human existence, “the whole man hallowing and his complete salvation hieratically effecting”, it follows that “the Resurrection will be his [man’s] most perfect salvation”²⁷³. Recalling that Dionysius has defined σωτηρία as being the preservation of each nature²⁷⁴, we wonder how else an embodied spirit would be preserved “according to its proper... being and order” unless it were through Resurrection (another example, perhaps, of an essentially Christian understanding informing a Neoplatonic commonplace) The seventh Chapter marks the end of the movement from “doors” to altar to “doors”, at both ends of which there is a “dying” in Christ and to the world. Dionysius is careful therefore to note the parallels with Baptism: the last kiss and anointing of the body with myron recall the conclusion to the first sacrament²⁷⁵, just as the expression “re-birth [παλιγγενεσία]²⁷⁶ echoes the “divine birth” of Baptism. The Christian’s struggles [ἀγῶνες], of which Baptism marked the beginning²⁷⁷ and monastic tonsure the intensification²⁷⁸, are here portrayed as attaining their conclusion²⁷⁹ in sure hope of a “cessation of labors... and a city divine [πολιτεία ἐνθεος] in the light and land of the living”²⁸⁰. To reject the transcendent end of the cycle, the overcoming of death, would thus be to reject the cycle as a whole: the Fall, the Incarnation, Baptism, and, between the “ends” toward and from the altar, the progression of sacraments wherein Dionysius has sought to portray “the divine ordinance [θεσμοθεσία]” as “providing communion in the divine to both [soul and body]”²⁸¹. The inner consistency of the *EH* would be quite broken.

c) Consistent with the Corpus Dionysiacum as a whole

We have noted²⁸² the opinion suggested by Roques concerning the discrepancies between the strictly vertical vision of the *CH* and the obviously more fluid, less rigidly fixed, structure of the *EH*. Roques advanced the view that Dionysius was compelled by the presence of an already existing Church structure to adjust his Neoplatonic doctrine and treatment in order to account for it. As we maintain that the *EH* provides us with the unique context within which the other treatises are to be read and their doctrine apprehended, we cannot accept Roques’ analysis as adequate. We look up to the *CH* (and *DN/MT*) from the *EH*, and not down

273. *EH* VII.3.9 565BC (130:3-5); see also Roques, *L’Univers*, 8.

274. *DN* VIII.9 896D (205:16-19).

275. *EH* VII.3.8 565A (129:12-22).

276. *EH* VII.1.1 553A (120:23) and VII.1.3 556B (122:15).

277. See *EH* II.3.5 and II.3.6 401A-404A (76:11-77:23).

278. See *EH* VI.1.3 532D-533A (116:9-19); VI.3.2 533D (117:23-118:5).

279. *EH* VII.1.1 553AB (121:1-4), and VII.3.9 565BC (129:24-130:5).

280. *Ep.* IX.5 1112D-1113A (206:1-3).

281. *EH* VII.3.9 565B (129:29).

282. See above, Chapter III, 116, 120, and well as II, 72-73.

from the angelic world to ours. We look up to the vision of a perfect, unfallen world and towards that time when we, too, shall be granted the lineaments of its sure and certain foundation [ἰδούσις] in God²⁸³. It is the perspective one takes in treating Dionysius that is crucial. To read him from, as it were, the top downwards – as do most of his critics – is inevitably to portray him as primarily a Neoplatonist philosopher with Christian pretensions, whose descent from certain immutable, divine principles grows increasingly more uncertain, and his discourse increasingly spotted with Christian excrescences, until, by the time he has stumbled all the way down to the realm of the phenomenal, i.e., the Church, his vision has grown so riddled with inconsistencies and top-heavy with accretions that it sinks into confusion – suffers exactly that “shipwreck” that Hornus understood as the outcome of the *CD*²⁸⁴. To take, on the other hand, his Christian professions seriously and so begin with him at the “doors” of the Church, and then move toward the altar and up to the latter’s significance will eliminate a great many, if not all, of the problems which its critics have, particularly this century, discovered in the *CD*.

We maintain in any case that this is precisely the case with regard to the “failure” of our hierarchy exactly to parallel the angels’. When we look up through our hierarchy to that of the angels’, the same inconsistencies that to the philosopher appeared embarrassing now take on an entirely new dimension, or better, point toward the new age. They become, in short, eschatological indicators. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is indeed a “fluid” organism, its ranks are not fixed in so far as one may move up – and down – among them. The very fact of initiation (Baptism), of hieratic consecration (ordination), of the existence of penitents and others who have fallen from grace (and their possible re-admission), even the want or tenuous nature of the *opere operato* principle, and, last and most glaringly of all, the fact of death to which Dionysius devotes considerable space, these all point to, require, a resolution beyond the confines of the present age.

d) A reply to the problems of law and grace: the nature of an icon

That the ἀναλογία or divine purpose for each particular Christian is not infallibly apparent on examination of the actual composition of the hierarchical ladder at any given time, and that the position of each does not necessarily even correspond to his or her state of personal grace or, even if so, that the possibility of descent or of further ascent – in short, the ἄγων – is always present, these bring us back to the questions with which we concluded our last section: the “orders” of law and grace, realized eschatology, and the nature of the icon. If the interior reality of each person in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy does not correspond to his

283. See *DN* I.4 592BC (113:11-115:5); VI.2 865D (194:10-15); *EH* VII.1.1 553A (120:16-22); and *Ep.* IX.5 1112Dff (205:8ff).

284. “Réflexions” 57-62 and “Recherches”, 80-81.

exterior rank, and if even a bishop may prove false, then, while the structures of grace and the visible ordering of the ranks of faithful may be virtually identified, they cannot be so completely. There is a manifest tension within the single τάξις of our hierarchy. This tension is limited by, and points toward, death and the resolution of the future age. Dionysius' eschatology therefore cannot be a fully realized one. The ranks and functions embraced by the hierarchical τάξις truly reveal the active power and, as it were, shape of grace, but they are also open. They reveal and demand both a vocation and a hope. This, we maintain, is the very nature of our hierarchy as icon: it is both the reality of grace and the promise of grace, the revelation in fact of him who is present and still to come, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.

e) The Resurrection as fulfillment of the icon

Let us return at this point to the idea itself of Resurrection and ask how it fits, if at all, within Dionysius' system as we have described it so far. Central to the notion of Resurrection, as the Christian tradition has proclaimed it, is the insistence on the continuity of the embodied state in the world to come. At the same time the tradition looks toward a permanent change or transfiguration in the conditions of incarnate being that will enable a communion in God at once far greater – “eye hath not seen” – than is possible to us in the present age, and no longer subject to diminishment or falling away. We have seen that Dionysius, too, has both the continuity and the change, i.e., that his formal presentation meets the requirements of orthodoxy. Indeed, but does he mean it? It appears to us that he does, because it answers the requirements and tensions within his presentation of the body, and so by extension of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as icon. The embodied state is one within the “veils” we discussed in our previous chapter, that nexus of matter, form, gesture, and word through and in which the divine economy, Christ, acts to reveal himself while remaining hidden. The body is, on the personal level, what our hierarchy is for the whole: the image of the present age, the reality of symbols through which we have been given to discern the lineaments of the age to come “as in a glass darkly”. The two, our hierarchy and the body, parallel one another in their reflection of the tensions of existence and loyalty to Christ in a world still darkened by the Fall. Where the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy reflects this in the “fluidity” and consequent tensions we noted above, the incarnate spirit does so in its continued struggle against the “appetites of the flesh”²⁸⁵, the “corrupting pleasures” and “seeming good”²⁸⁶ that infect the will and turn it toward sin²⁸⁷ – in short, the struggle with “the inclinations... and deceits of the Adversary [τοῦ ἐναντίου]”²⁸⁸. Reflecting one another in the ἄγων, they both

285. *EH* V.3.4 512A (111:22).

286. *EH* III.3.7 433D-436A (86:21-24); and *DN* XI.5 953A (220:21-221:4).

287. *EH* II.3.3 400A (74:15-19).

288. *EH* III.3.11 440C (90:20-21).

look forward to the same hope. A Christian death signifies both the end of the struggle and the transition (μετάταξις) to a state of being without change (τὸ ἀτρέπτου)²⁸⁹. Having shared with the soul in its struggles, the body will share as well “in the soul’s inalterable foundation in the divine life [ἐν τῇ ἀτρέπτῳ κατὰ τὴν θεϊαν ζωὴν ἰδρύσει]”²⁹⁰. With the end of the struggle, with death and Resurrection, comes the shift from mutable to immutable where, we may assume, the outer and inner realities will correspond, and thus the end of the age of the icon: “they shall see more clearly [ὁρῶσι ἐμφανέστερον]”²⁹¹. “Now”, as Dionysius writes in the crucial text from the *DN*²⁹², we are obliged to see “through the sacred veils of the philanthropy of Scripture and the hierarchical tradition;” “now, as is possible for us... we make use of symbols for the divine things;” “but then”, as immortal and incorruptible, “we shall be filled full of his *visible* [ὁρατὴ] theophany, shining round about us in most evident [φανόταται] brilliancies, as about the disciples in that most divine transfiguration” – but then, in another’s words, we shall see “face to face”.

Both body and soul, both the Christian and the Church, look forward to the day when Christ will be all in all. The icon, as we have stressed, is a notion linked firmly to the Incarnation, the means whereby Christ, and through him, the angels and the “powers” of God, are presently discerned and their presence felt. If it looks, then, back to the economy of Christ, it must equally anticipate the Resurrection; and, if individual Christians look forward to the resurrection of their own bodies, then it can only be because they have become one with the single body of Christ, “ὡς μέλη Χριστοῦ γεγονότα”²⁹³. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is this single body, the present reality of the Incarnation and thus, necessarily, of the Resurrection: “our most divine life in Christ which has already begun [ἀρχθεῖσαν ἤδη]”²⁹⁴.

SUMMARY OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL HIERARCHY AND THE *CORPUS DIONYSIACUM*

1. A series of icons

Let us begin our recapitulation with the *EH*. It is an icon. An icon is a place of meeting or joining [συμβολή] of different realities. It can be an image in the strict sense, but we understand the term as covering persons as well as things, actions, and mental constructs, or ideas. Whatever the particular icon may be, it always carries both a revelation and a vocation, a presence and a promise. The

289. *EH* VII.1.1 553A (121:1).

290. *Ibid.* (121:3-47).

291. *EH* VII.1.2 553 (121:24).

292. *DN* 592BC: note the sequence: νῦν μὲν... τότε δὲ... νῦν δὲ (114:1; 114:7; 115:6). And see our article “On the Other Hand” *SVTQ* (1990) esp. 312-316. See also the Scholiast’s remark that, in this passage, Dionysius affirms the body’s share in the Resurrection (*PG* IV 197C).

293. *EH* VII.1.1 553B (121:5-6).

294. *EH* VII.1.2 553C (121:13).

icon which is our hierarchy is one that works at one and the same time on several levels, at once revealing and thus realizing the presence of: 1) Providence; 2) the angels; 3) the Incarnation; 4) our world, i.e., our “context” of space, time, and matter as redeemed; thus 5) our very selves; and finally 6) the mystical union itself. We have discussed numbers 3), 4), and 5) chiefly in connection with the treatise on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy while 1), 2), and 6) would appear to be properly the subjects of, respectively, the *DN*, *CH*, and *MT*. It has been our thesis, though, that each of the latter three discovers its proper setting or context within the frame of the *EH*. We move, then, to a brief summary of each of these icons.

(1) As outlined in the first section of our preceding chapter, each hierarchy is the complete manifestation of Providence on a given plane of being, the divine *ad extra*, “the icon of the divine beauty”²⁹⁵. The τάξις of hierarchy reveals the uncreated powers at work in the creature, while hierarchic “science” means participation, through contemplation of the τάξις and its content, in the divine wisdom informing those powers, and hierarchic “activity” the sharing in the δυνάμεις themselves – i.e., finally the sharing in the single creative and unifying action of divine love. Hierarchy, generally, is thus the revelation, contemplation of, and participation in God as he “moves out of” himself.

(2) The hierarchies, specifically, are two, corresponding to the two fundamental categories of created being: 1) intelligible (νοητός), and 2) sensible (αἰσθητός), pure spirit and incarnate existence, the worlds of angels and of humans. The former enjoy the priority – a given of the Platonic tradition, it is true, but one no less rooted in Christian patristic tradition and even the NT. As we have noted, the angelic is the model of our own hierarchy. Their perfect and unfallen spiritual world is declared in Scripture, in whose revelation to us they have played a mediatory role²⁹⁶, and it is mirrored in the structures of our rites and rankings. Their active presence is, indeed, as much a feature of our cult as it has been in the granting of Scripture. God has made us their “concelebrants”²⁹⁷. Through our hierarchy we are both linked to theirs, and are given to contemplate their presence.

(3) But it was not always thus. The link between human and angelic, between our mode of being and theirs, was disturbed, broken, by the Fall, through which we were given over to the Devil and his angels. Even the gift of the Law to Moses and the OT dispensation established only a partial and shadowy reflection of the Celestial Hierarchy (the νοητά)²⁹⁸. Thus we find the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as the icon of that specific “procession” of God which re-established us in communion with him and so with the angels: the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is through the “theurgies” of Christ that we are rendered concelebrants (συλλειτουργοί) of the heavenly liturgy. It is these same theurgies that are rendered present to us through

295. *CH* III.2 165B (18:11).

296. *CH* IV.3 180D-181A (22:11-17); and Chapter III above, 144.

297. See, for example, *CH* I.3 124A (9:9-10).

298. *EH* V.1.2 501CD (105:9-21).

the cult. In Christ's presence, now, we discover the presence of both the past and the future, for the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is peculiarly the icon of the world to come, sign and presence of the eschaton. The Church which enfolds us in Baptism is the body of his Incarnation, radiant for holy eyes with his divinity.

(4) The "powers" or Providence bring us back to the notion of *τάξις* and our discussion in Chapter III. If a hierarchy is the reflection or analog of Providence on a given plane of being, then it follows that it must embrace everything which is real and enduring on that plane, i.e., real and enduring as the expression of the divine will. Our hierarchy is therefore the icon of our world, both the latter's present reality and the revelation of its promised transfiguration. Matter, form, gesture and spoken word are the "veils" of our hierarchy and the components of human existence. Thus our hierarchy embraces the whole of the physical world. It is the revelation, consecration, and promise of redemption of the entire sphere of our being, both actualizing (albeit at present "hiddenly") and pointing toward the time when the whole of material creation will become fully transparent to the spiritual and divine. The meaning of our world, the soul, as it were, of the cosmos, discovers itself at the altar.

(5) With the discovery of the world's sense or soul within the sanctuary, comes as well the revelation of one's own soul or being, and of its meaning. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is also the image of humanity, of the individual Christian from birth (in Baptism) to death (being ushered outside of the doors in the sacrament of burial). We find portrayed in between, in the sequence of ranks, the stages of the Christian life: from purification to illumination to contemplative union and then, moving down from the altar, the action of the *θεομίμησις* – or exercise of love – which must follow communion with God, as represented in the grades of the clergy. We spoke above of the parallel between the individual and the Church, that both bear physical bodies through which they have been given to know and to manifest God. The altar, then, is for both the sign and reality of Christ's presence, of God, and of the promised transfiguration to come. The altar is for our world the place where it discovers its soul, Christ, and so it is also the type of that "place" within each believer, hidden now by the "veils" of the flesh, where he must turn in order to discover God in himself. The altar is the type of the soul.

(6) We are brought to our last icon: our hierarchy as the type, and so for each the potential fact, of the mystical union itself. Let us, rather, continue our narrowing process and say that the whole Church hierarchy as we have discussed it is the icon of the individual soul. The altar thus answers to that "place" (*τόπος*) within each soul where God stoops to dwell, the "peak" of the Mountain where, having completed the ascent, the believer encounters the divine darkness. Bearing in mind Dionysius' assertion that each reason-endowed being (Dionysius has *νοῦς*) has "first, middle, and final powers", powers he further identifies as participation in the divine activities of purification, illumination and perfection²⁹⁹,

299. *CH X.3 273C* (41:1-6); and see Gandillac, 141, note 4.

we discover the soul motif as borne out when we recall the parallel we sought to establish between the three motions of the soul in contemplation³⁰⁰ and the activities that are proper to each of the primary three sacraments. Furthermore, we tried to indicate the role that each rank of the hierarchy plays as representing one of the three motions in either its passive aspect (the laity) or its active one (the clergy) – hence as well certain of the difficulties in Dionysius’ notion of the τάξις³⁰¹. At the heart of this motion or activity, directed toward it in contemplation and proceeding from it in the θεομίμησις, we find the altar, sign in this instance of that place or “faculty” (ἐνώσις³⁰²) within the human soul which is *capax Dei*. Recalling our discussion above in Chapter II of the triad ἀφαίρεσις - ἀγνώσις - ἐνώσις as indivisible from purification - illumination - perfection, we may thus say of the altar that it is the sign of ἔκστασις and union with the divine.

2. Jesus: the presence of the “sudden”

The divine for Dionysius is not, however, a faceless entity. If in the review of our hierarchy as icon we spoke just now of a “narrowing” process, from the δυνάμεις of God to the angels, to the Incarnation, to our world, to humanity, to the soul and union with God, then at the terminus of these “compressions”, at the very point of the intersection of human and divine, we discover Christ: “Jesus, our most divine altar... in Whom... we have access [to God]”³⁰³. It is Jesus who went “forth from the One which is his by nature”³⁰⁴, who “took on essence from everything which is truly human”³⁰⁵, and, having become human while remaining divine, took “that which is ours and raised it far above us”³⁰⁶. The humanity, or body, of Christ is the Church that enfolds and incorporates us, the Church typified and rendered actual within the enclosure of the temple and the gathering of the baptized faithful at the mysteries. The “divinity of Jesus which is cause of all things”³⁰⁷ and “works all things in all”³⁰⁸ is the goal and term of the ἀναγωγή. It is indeed *the* mystery of the altar, the “darkness” beyond the light that forms the subject of the *MT*.

300. *DN* IV.9 705AB (153:10-154:6).

301. See *CH* IX.3 260C (37:17-38:1); and Gandillac, 134, note 4, concerning the term, ἀνομοιότης (see also *DN* VIII.9 897BC [206:11-207:5]). The latter is a key notion for the understanding of hierarchy as the divinely-willed diversity of the created world. Unlike Origen (*Peri Archon* II.9.2), Dionysius does not admit an original equality of all creatures (see our discussion below, Chapter VI, 274-275). As a result, however, we do discover that undeniable ambiguity in the Dionysian cosmos, “liée à une métaphore unique, qui désigne à la fois l’ordre hiérarchique voulu par Dieu et les désordres nés du péché”.

302. *DN* I.1 585B-588A (108:3-5).

303. *EH* IV.3.10 484D (103:4-7).

304. *EH* III.3.13 444C (93:18).

305. *MT* III 1033A (146:7-8).

306. *DN* II.10 648D-649A (135:3-9).

307. *Ibid.*, 648C (134:7).

308. *DN* XI.5 953A (221:8).

The themes of Christ, altar, and soul – together with a striking illustration of Dionysius' ability to allude simultaneously to sources in both Christian and Platonist literature – converge in the first five of the "Epistles" that conclude the *CD*, in particular in *Epistle III*. These short compositions carry on the thought of the *MT* and also serve to reinforce the latter's position at the heart of the corpus through reprising, in summary form, the main lines of Dionysius' thought as we have tried to sketch it. Certain words and phrases, and again one term in particular, serve at once to echo the Areopagite's central concerns, and to bring them to a focus on the person of Jesus. In reviewing these terms and by tracing some of their associations, we shall also be directing the reader toward our investigation of Dionysius' Christian sources in the section following.

Epistles I through V work as a kind of chiasm, with *V* paralleling *I*, *IV* picking up on *II*, and *Epistle III* tying them up and together. *Epistle I*³⁰⁹ carries on the themes of darkness (here *σκότος*) and unknowing (*ἄγνοσία*) that were stressed in the *MT*, especially *MT I.3*'s account of Moses' ascent up Sinai into the cloud. The light of knowledge of existing things, Dionysius tells us, blocks the "darkness" that signifies divine transcendence. God is "known beyond intellect", and "complete unknowing is knowledge of him who is beyond all things known"³¹⁰. Much has been made of this "unknowing", and especially of the "darkness", as peculiarly Dionysian and opposed to the experience of God as light, but we find Dionysius returning to the theme in *Epistle V* where he in fact equates darkness with light in God. "The divine darkness (*γνόφος*)", he tells us, is the "unapproachable light (*ἀπρόσιτον φῶς*) within which God is said to dwell"³¹¹, and which the initiate may indeed see and know "by neither seeing nor knowing"³¹², i.e., by means of the *ἔκστασις* we first met in our Chapter I above. God is not therefore met in darkness *per se*, but in the excess of his "super-essential outpouring of light"³¹³. The theme of transcendent light is important. It ties into the theophanies we shall find Dionysius alluding to in *Epistle III*. Commenting on *Epistle V*, the Scholiast gives us a hint of these theophanies by suggesting that the sight of God is comparable to the human eye's inability to look directly at the sun's brilliance at noonday, *μεσημβρία*³¹⁴. Dionysius himself provides another and related hint by pointing to his alleged mentor, St. Paul, as one who "is said to have known the God... who is beyond every intellection and knowledge"³¹⁵. Therefore, he adds, Paul could well speak of God's "unsearchable judgements", "inexpressible gifts", and of the peace that "transcends every intellect"³¹⁶.

309. 1065AB (156-157).

310. *Ibid.* (157:3-5).

311. 1073A (162:3-4).

312. *Ibid.* (162:6-7).

313. "ὑπερβολή... τῆς ὑπερουσίου φωτοχυσίας". *Ibid.* (162:5).

314. *PG IV* 536B.

315. *Ep. V* 1073AV (162:11-163:10).

316. *Ibid.* 1076A (163:2-4), citing Rom 1:33, 2 Cor 9:15, and Phil 4:7.

While we shall return momentarily to Paul in concert with the experience of God and noonday light, the reference concluding *Epistle V* to God's gifts directs us to the second pair of the chiasm, *Epistles II* and *IV*. The former takes up the question of deification and its relation to God in himself³¹⁷. There is a distinction, Dionysius insists, since although God is indeed the "deifying gift" (θεοποιὸν δῶρον), there is yet a difference between the gift and the giver. God remains alone above, ἐπέκεινα, every relation he enters into. The Scholiast then directs us back to *DN XI.6*, and so to the distinction we have underlined repeatedly between God *in se* and the divine powers or energies at work *ad extra*³¹⁸. *Epistle IV* picks up on the locus of these divine activities, and specifically of the gift of deification³¹⁹. The locus is none other than Jesus and, by implication, his Church. "How", Dionysius begins, "can you say that Jesus, who is beyond (ἐπέκεινα) all things, was ranked essentially with all humanity?" This is so, he replies, not by the loss of his transcendence nor thanks to a defect in his humanity, but because "when he came truly into [our] being (οὐσία), he was made being in manner beyond being (οὐσιώδη ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν), and works what is proper to humanity in a way transcending humanity (ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἐνεργεῖ τὰ ἄνθρώπου)"³²⁰. Dionysius then cites two of the NT miracles, the virgin birth and walking on the water, and concludes by noting that, in Jesus, transcendence and immanence, or ἀπόφασις and κατάφασις, have met and joined: those things "which are affirmed (καταφασκόμενα) about Jesus' philanthropy preserve the force of transcendent negation"³²¹. Therefore, he continues, Christ

... did not do what is divine as God, nor what is human as a man, but instead [as] God having become a man, he has administered to us [or, "arranged for us"] a certain new, theandric activity³²².

It seems clear to us that what the Areopagite means by this famous (or infamous) phrase is, simply, the new citizenship or polity – the ἔνθεος πολιτεία, suggested by the use of πολιτεύομαι – of the Church. It is in the latter that we receive the gift of deification, and thus it is in and through the Church that we encounter the mystery of Christ's divinity in a "transcendent outpouring of light".

These points are summed up by the center and "punchline" of the chiasm, *Epistle III*. It is worth citing in full:

"Suddenly" means that which is brought out of the hitherto invisible and beyond hope into the manifest. And I think that here the theology [i.e.,

317. 1068-69A (158).

318. PG IV 529D.

319. Ep. IV 1972A-C (160:3-161:10).

320. 1072B (160:11-12).

321. "Τὴν δύναμιν ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως ἔχοντα". *Ibid.* (161:4-5).

322. "... οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἀνδρωθέντος Θεοῦ, καινὴν τινα τὴν θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος". *Ibid.* 1072C (161:8-10).

sacred scripture] is suggesting the philanthropy of Christ. The super-essential has proceeded out of its hiddenness to become manifest to us by becoming a human being. But he is also hidden, both after the manifestation and, to speak more divinely, even within it. For this is the hidden of Jesus, and neither by reason nor by intellect can his mystery be brought forth, but instead even when spoken it remains ineffable, and when conceived unknowable³²³.

We note first of all the familiar language of unknowability (ἄρρητον, ἄγνωστον), together with the simultaneous presence of transcendence and immanence (κρύφιος/ἐκφανσις). These meet in what appears to be simply a rather oddly phrased paragraph dealing with the mystery (μυστήριον) of the Incarnation. The key to the chiasm lies in the opening word, “suddenly”. The “sudden” has a long history in Platonist literature, and its appearance here in the *CD* has been justly read by scholars such as Beierwaltes and Mortley as yet another indication of the Areopagite’s Neoplatonist roots³²⁴. This is undoubtedly true, and a glance at the Platonist tradition of the “sudden” reveals interesting parallels with both *Epistle III* in particular, and the *CD* more generally. In the *Parmenides* (156de), the ἐξαίφνης marks the timeless moment of transition between the unmoving sphere of the ideas, the realm of στάσις, and the flux of material phenomena, κίνησις. We have noted in our Chapter I the importance of these two terms for Dionysius’ portrait of God and world. There are also two other important appearances of the “sudden” in Plato’s corpus. His *Epistle VII* (341cd) pictures the philosopher’s quest, after long travail, concluding “suddenly, as light from fire” (the vision of God?). In the *Symposium* (210c), Diotima’s speech has the “sudden” marking the climax and goal of the ascent of ἔρως, i.e., the vision of beauty itself. Plotinus’ language concerning the vision of the One in *Enneads* V.3.17; 5.7; and VI.7.36 is, if anything, even more strikingly reminiscent of Dionysius. The epiphany of the One occurs “suddenly”, and the initiate sees it through and in the light of its own presence. Light, ἔρως, and the mystical vision are also fundamental Dionysian themes.

The question most scholars have asked, however, is how this matrix of associations ties into what appears to be a passage devoted to the historical event of the Incarnation. Mortley’s judgment is not untypical of their conclusions:

323. “Ἐξαίφνης ἐστὶ τὸ παρ’ ἐλπίδα καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τέως ἀφανοῦς εἰς τὸ ἐκφανές ἐξαγόμενον. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλανθρωπίας καὶ τοῦτο οἶμαι τὴν θεολογίαν αἰνίττεσθαι, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ κρυφίου τὸν ὑπερούσιον εἰς τὴν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐμφάνειαν ἀνθρωπικῶς οὐσιωθέντα προεληλυθέναι. Κρύφιος δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐκφανσιν ἡ, ἵνα τὸ θεϊότερον εἴπω, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐκφάνσει. Καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ Ἰησοῦ κέκρυπται, καὶ οὐδενὶ λόγῳ οὔτε νῦν τὸ κατ’ αὐτὸν ἐξηχται μυστήριον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λεγόμενον ἄρρητον μένει καὶ νοούμενον ἄγνωστον”. 1069B (159:1-10).

324. See W. Beierwaltes, “Ἐξαίφνης, oder die Paradoxie des Augenblicks”, *PJLXXIV* (1966/67) 270-281, and R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence II* (Bonn: 1986) 236-239. But see also von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*, 179 for some suggestion of what we shall pursue below.

“Dionysius is attempting to reconcile the Christian Incarnation with the Neoplatonic moment of transformation...the Biblical allusions do not help, since... [he] means to offer a demythologized account of Christ’s epiphany”³²⁵. Noting as well the tension between manifestation and secrecy, Mortley further sees the Areopagite as striking “a new note in the philosophy of classical antiquity” and harking back, in fact, to the literature of the gnostics³²⁶. In short, the use of ἑξαίφνης in this context appears to be highly suspicious, at least as far as the Areopagite’s Christian credentials are concerned. The single other appearance of this word in the *CD* seems to bear out the verdict of a fundamentally Platonist background. In *CH XV*, Dionysius, in an apparent borrowing from Plato’s *Ep. VII*, speaks of the “sudden” appearance of fire as an illustration of divinity³²⁷.

But all is not so simple. The biblical allusions that Mortley dismisses do have an important role. They in fact play quite as directly into the themes of this and the other four *Epistles* under discussion as do Plato and Plotinus. ἑξαίφνης occurs five times in the NT, four of which are of direct interest to us. Turning first of all to the Pauline connection we noted in *Epistle V*, we find that the “sudden” is used twice – in Acts 9:3 and 22:6 – in the context of two of Luke’s narratives of the key event in Paul’s life, his conversion on the road to Damascus. Quoting from the RSV version of 22:6: “And it happened that, as I was travelling and approaching Damascus, at around midday a great light from heaven shone suddenly around me”³²⁸. The light, of course, is Christ himself, who speaks to Paul and sends him on his way to his life’s work, the apostolate to the gentiles. Thus associated with the ἑξαίφνης we find the themes of light, personal encounter with Jesus, the note of the “midday”, and, perhaps not least, the mission to the “Greeks”. In Luke 2:13 the “sudden” appears in connection with an angelic epiphany. A heavenly messenger delivers the news of the Christ’s birth to the shepherds near Bethlehem, and the “glory of the Lord shone round about [περιέλαμψεν] them”. A few verses later: “There was suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host praising God”. Thus ἑξαίφνης appears in this passage specifically associated with moment of the Incarnation, with light and glory, and with the celestial liturgy. In Mark 13:36 we find the “sudden” at the conclusion of Christ’s eschatological discourse. The Lord urges his disciples to abandon their preoccupation with times and calculations of the parousia, and instead to be wakeful, lest having returned suddenly, the master “find them sleeping”. Here the “sudden” is clearly connected with the eschaton.

The last point takes us indeed to the text that Dionysius is most probably quoting directly (though surely with the others just cited also in mind). According

325. *Word to Silence*, 237.

326. *Ibid.* and 239-240. But see our discussion of Ephrem’s use of the same hidden/manifest antithesis in Chapter IX below, 359-362.

327. *CH XV.2* 329C (53:1).

328. “Περὶ μεσημβρίαν ἑξαίφνης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ περιστράψαι φῶς ἰκανὸν περὶ ἐμέ”.

to the Scholiast, the Areopagite is responding to a question “about a prophetic saying of the prophet Malachi [Mal.3:1] which goes: ‘And suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come into his temple [ναός], and the angel of great counsel whom you desire’”³²⁹. Malachi is of course talking about Yahweh’s eschatological visitation, and sees it taking place in the Jerusalem temple. Now the latter, as a very bricks and mortar sort of affair, would seem to be far from Dionysius’ reading of the text. On the other hand, it does not seem impossible that the Areopagite might have had at least partially in mind his own neighborhood church, the curtained sanctuary of a Syrian congregation gathered for the Eucharist. He surely meant his readers to catch two other associations as well. First, there is the obvious connection with the Incarnation, the temple of Christ’s body, that the Scholiast sees and draws out (along with everyone else since), but there is also the ναός of the individual Christian soul, to which, doubtless with I Cor 3:16 and 6:19-29 in mind, Dionysius had already alluded in *EH* III.3.7. This personal, individual application of the temple motif thus brings us back to the note of mystical experience we began with in the Platonist material and found confirmed, though in a different key, in the NT texts of – especially – Paul’s conversion. To summarize: “suddenly” each Christian may meet Christ, who is the eternal and infinite in the flesh. The meeting takes place on two levels, in the temple and on the altar of the Church’s liturgy, and within the sanctuary of the believer’s heart, or νοῦς. This meeting also includes the accompaniment of the heavenly liturgy. Recalling the μεσημβρία, together with the NT allusions and Dionysius’ own use of the Transfiguration in *DNI* 4, the meeting appears to be an experience of overpowering light. Creator (στάσις) and creature (κίνησις) are joined, and in order to meet both must have departed from themselves (ἑκστασις), though God remains ever and wholly transcendent (νοούμενον ἄγνωστον) while the human being does not lose his or her humanity. This is, in short, the θεανδρική ἐνέργεια and heavenly polity of the Church, the anticipation of the eschaton in Christ’s sacramental and experiential (or mystical) presence. Thus it is not at all surprising to find Dionysius concluding his *Epistles*, and the *CD* as a whole, with a letter to John the Divine in exile on Patmos³³⁰. This allusion to Revelation, with that book’s sharp eschatological anticipation and liturgical tone (in addition to prophetic experience), fits the Dionysian ἐξαίφνης: “Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus”. The visible things, as Dionysius writes the seer, are “manifest images of the invisible” (i.e., of the eschaton), and there are already faithful who, here on earth, have begun to taste of the Kingdom to come³³¹.

The reference to some who have already been accorded the experience of the Kingdom recalls the prologue to the Transfiguration narrative in Mark 9:1³³² and

329. *PG* IV 532A.

330. *Ep.* X 1117A-20A (208-209).

331. *Ibid.* 1117B (208:9 and 209:2).

332. See also the conclusion of the narrative, where “suddenly” – here ἐξαίφνης – the disciples find the cloud of glory gone and Jesus, as normal, standing among them.

leads to a final observation concerning the ἐξαίφνης. Roughly three generations after the likely appearance of the *Areopagitica*, the Emperor Justinian, patron of the Church and protector of the ecumene, ordered the construction of a fortress monastery at a site that was at once a longtime haunt of Christian hermits and the traditional location of the mount of revelation in Exodus: Jebel Mousa near the tip of the Sinai peninsula. Within the monastery church, in the apse above the altar, the emperor's artisans constructed a mosaic of the Transfiguration³³³. To our knowledge, this image is the prototype of the typical Byzantine icon of the Gospel event, and throughout the Orthodox world to the present. What is of particular interest to us is, first, the setting of the image and its subject. We find a portrayal of Christ transfigured above the altar of a monastery church at the foot of Mount Sinai. Second, the image itself seems to us to speak of the Dionysian vision, especially as summed up in the *Epistles* just considered. Christ is shown clothed in brilliant white and gold. Rays shoot out from his person to strike the prophets Elijah and Moses at his right and left, together with the stunned disciples at his feet. We recall the μεσημβρία and the "ray" imagery so important to the CD. In addition, the mandorla around Christ has a curious feature (also usually reproduced in later Byzantine icons). It is banded. At its outer edges a pale shade, roughly the same as the rays, the rings of color become increasingly dark until, immediately around the person of the Transfigured, the innermost ring is a deep, dark blue. This is surely not only a representation of the cloud overshadowing the disciples³³⁴, but is also intended to depict the ever-deepening and finally impenetrable mystery of Jesus' divinity. In short, we think that this image may be an illustration of Dionysius' *Epistles* I - V, and especially of III, the ἐξαίφνης: the manifestation of the divine secrecy, hidden even in the revelation. In Dionysius' terms, the mosaic's location over the altar denotes the presence of the Mystical Theology at the heart of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, and both meet thus in the person of Christ. He, divinity in the flesh, is the one whom the Christian is called to meet at the altar. He is the revelation of divine providence, the bond with the angels, the soul of the world, the content of the liturgy, and the unique μυστήριον. He is the light of divine darkness – recalling Moses' ascent in *MT* I.3 – encountered in the secret places of the soul. Jesus is our hierarchy, the meaning of

333. For the dating of the Sinai mosaic, see V. Benešević "Sur la date de la mosaïque de la Transfiguration au Mont Sinai" *Byzantion* 1 (1924) 145-172, and E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (Cambridge MA: 1977) 99-104, for an analysis of this image as breaking new ground in the depiction of the Transfiguration. The contrast with Ravenna's contemporary portrayal of the same gospel event is particularly striking. To get the sense of our remarks following, see also the edition of *National Geographic* 125,1 (Jan. 1964), esp. the remarkable photographs on 108-109 and 111. The last in particular shows the mosaic by looking directly up at it from before the altar, over which it is centered.

334. *Ibid.* 162. See Mark 9:7, and also the cloud into which Moses ascends in Exodus 19 and 24. In connection with the latter, esp. 24:10 in the LXX version, recall the τόπος θεοῦ and the shade of the firmament (blue) and see our remarks on Evagrius' handling of this verse in Chapter VIII below, 335-338.

the icon. Everything in the *CD* derives from and points toward his glory, the new theandric polity made manifest in the Church.

The Dionysian ascent from the physical realm (the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy) to the world of created intelligible being (the Celestial Hierarchy), and thence to the uncreated *νοητά* or divine Providence (the Divine Names), and finally to the hidden divinity is a series of meditations on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and the mystery of the altar. We are called to the *θεωρία* of the icon which is the Church. It is the icon embracing all icons, the place of our encounter with God and constituted as such by Christ's Incarnation and abiding presence.

3. The unity of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

Turning very briefly to the *CH* and *DN*, we see that the *EH* is also intended to embrace them. In the *CH*, the first three chapters are devoted to themes linking the two hierarchies, i.e., to the notion of hierarchy in general (with special mention of ours as reflecting the angelic one and of the Church as a whole reflecting the ordering of the soul³³⁵), and to the modes of interpretation of Scripture and its images. The remainder of the treatise is given over to the analysis of angelic characteristics as described by the Biblical names for them, and the accounts and nature of their activities. Here as well, however, the connection with the *EH* is not difficult to discern. The angels are described as both exemplars – thus for example the first order of the *CH* and its continual “liturgy” of praise in contemplation of God as the “places [τόποι] of the divine rest”³³⁶ – and as active agents in revelation. The first level of created being, the *νοητά*, are our models and our guides.

The *DN* has as its subject the second and uncreated level of the *νοητά* – the “intelligible names of God”³³⁷, his Providence or *δυνάμεις*. This treatise, too, claims its basis in Scripture³³⁸. Indeed, but how does this place the *DN* within a liturgical context? As we have had occasion to note, the Scripture is very much in the midst of the *EH*. It is placed upon the altar, its exposition is the particular prerogative of the hierarchy;³³⁹ it instructs the faithful in all things;³⁴⁰ it is read from at every service. The liturgical aspect of the *DN* is, in our view, further borne out by the remarkable language Dionysius employs throughout this treatise – as throughout the entire *CD*. Koch³⁴¹ devotes considerable space to the influence of the mystery language on our author, and we believe that this vocabulary,

335. See esp. *CH* I.3 121C-124A (8:14-9:15).

336. *CH* VII.4 212C (32:7-8).

337. *DN* I.1 588A (121:6).

338. See *DN* I.1 588A (108:6-8); I.2 588C (110:2-4); I.3 589B (111:6-12); and I.4 589D (112:7).

339. *EH* V.3.7 513CD (113:17-114:6).

340. *EH* III.3.4 429C-432A (83:13-84:6).

341. *Beziehungen*, 92ff.

represented by such terms as ὑμνεῖν or ὑμνολογία³⁴², points to Dionysius' basic concern to maintain what we might call a "cultic ambience" in all his works. The hush of the sanctuary – recall the frequent injunctions on silence before the uninitiated³⁴³ – prevails throughout the corpus. No less than the angels (rather, more so if anything, in as much as they are prior, the source of both hierarchies) are the powers or energies of God at work within our hierarchy and revealed by it. And, a final point, the initiation into the contemplation of the intelligibles, created and then uncreated, begins the moment one crosses the threshold of the Church doors. Indeed and to offer a tentative suggestion, the *DN* might be equated with the first half of the Eucharistic σύναξις, the "liturgy of the catechumens", whose particular function it is to read and teach the content of the scriptures. The *MT*, therefore, as peculiarly the mystery of the altar, would correspond to the Eucharistic anaphora and consecration, the realization of the presence³⁴⁴.

We return, then, to the final stage of the ascent and to Sinai. Let us take up once more the text we cited in the prologue to this chapter, the ascent of Moses described in the *MT*³⁴⁵. We wrote that this description, and the Biblical passages on which it is based, amount to an image of the *EH*, and that the stages of purification, illumination, and perfection correspond to Moses' rise to "the place where God is". In that "place" he encounters the "summit of the divine ascents", "the λόγος underlying the things subordinate to him who transcends all", and further that it is through these that "God's presence, which transcends every notion, is revealed". We have sought throughout this chapter to identify that "place" with the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy or, more accurately, to show the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and its heart, the altar, to be the σύμβολον or εἰκών where the worlds of matter and spirit, of humans and angels, of Creator and creature, meet and join. There, at the altar, the angels serve. There, too, are revealed the "wills" or "powers" of God *ad extra*. The ascent in contemplation is threefold. We move toward the altar, up the hierarchy of being, and into the depths of the soul until, finally, we attain to that "place" which marks the frontier of created being. There our own motion ceases and Another's begins, or better, continues, taking us up out of ourselves and into himself and the radiant darkness beyond the light of knowledge. God and human join within the Church. Rather, within the Church they are already united, and it but remains for each believer to recognize the divinity that, now in hidden manner, pervades the body of the Incarnation.

342. According to van den Daehle, *Indices*, 137-138, ὑμνέω appears in the *DN* 66 times, ὑμνός 7 times, ὑμνωδία 3 times, ὑμνολογία twice, ὑμνητικῶς, ὑμνολόγος, and ὑμνωδός each once.

343. For example, *DN* 1.8 597C (121:8-15); compare with *EH* 1.1 372A (63:7-11).

344. And to the *DN* we might add the two other, non-extant Dionysian treatises devoted to the exegesis of Scripture, the *Theological Outlines* and *Symbolic Theology*. For a parallel, see our discussion of Macarius in Chapter IX below, particularly of his *Homily* 52 (I), 382-384.

345. *MT* 1.3 1000C-1001A (143:8-144:15).

4. A Christian vision

We have come full circle from the beginnings of our essay. In Chapters I and II we began in the divine darkness and traced the course of the divine processions into creation, God's motion "outside of" himself and into immanence. Then we took note of the echoes, as it were, of the *δυνάμεις* in created being that enable the latter to move toward its reciprocal act of self-transcendence. During the course of the last two chapters we have sought to sketch the outlines of the Dionysian universe, the hierarchies, in which created intelligences move and have their being, and by means of which God's Providence leads them back to himself. We have spoken of the hierarchies in general and, at length, of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. At once the reality of our world and the presence among us of the divine, "our hierarchy" is both the way of our return and the place of our journey's end: the leap into *ἔκστασις* and union.

It has been the intention of this, the first and lengthier section of our essay, to portray the Areopagite's vision as consistently a Christian one, and furthermore, coherent. Its coherence rests primarily upon the *EH* as the context within which the whole of the *CD* is to be understood. Indeed, we might note that the vision of Dionysius which we have just sketched, that of the altar as the mystery at the heart of all things – of our world and our souls – and the irradiating reality of Christ's divinity, may be discerned today in the design and iconography of the Churches of Eastern Europe and the Near East. It is the vision which, over a century after our author, Maximus the Confessor would outline explicitly in his description of the Church as a series of icons embracing Providence, creation, man, and the soul³⁴⁶. For our present purposes, however, the question lies not so much with Dionysius' effects on his successors as with the matter of his Christian antecedents. Scholars who have stressed the Neoplatonist elements in the *CD* have been compelled to refuse the corpus its fundamental coherence, whether through separating the hierarchies from the *DN/MT* and dismissing the centrality of the former, or by endeavoring to maintain that the Neoplatonist vocabulary and – therefore – its presuppositions result in the "shipwreck" of whatever Christian intent the author may originally have had. To this we reply that there are certainly ambiguities or tensions within the *CD*, a number of which we have already indicated, but that very much rests on whether or not we can set the *CD* within a certain Christian context or tradition. The essential with regard to Dionysius is: 1) did he misjudge the risk and fail to salvage a vision both Christian in fundamental inspiration and, with perhaps certain reservations, generally coherent? and 2) did he have any predecessors in the Christian tradition to whom he may have looked and from whom he may have taken? We have tried to demonstrate that he did not fail in the broad outlines of his system. If we ask Dionysius, regarding the knowledge of the *νοητά*, the questions: what? where?

346. PG 91, esp. 664D-688B. And see our Concluding Remarks below, 403-404.

who? and how? we find him replying to the "what" with the processions of God in love, the ἐνέγγειαι, to the "who" with the person of Jesus, who reveals them, to the "where" with the Church and its worship, and finally to the "how" with the Revelation given in Scripture. His understanding of Providence is of a piece and it is rooted in Christ. It remains for us, then, to look now into the question of his Christian sources and their resonances in his system.

PART II : THE CHRISTIAN PREDECESSORS OF DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA

CHAPTER V

THE SCRIPTURES AND EARLY FATHERS

Introduction: In the four preceding chapters we sought to deal with the *CD* as a coherent, Christian vision. We did not, save for a few references, engage in any prolonged discussion of the corpus' Christian antecedents. Our primary attention, in so far as sources were concerned, was to show how we felt Dionysius to differ from his pagan predecessors in late antiquity. Now that we have given our interpretation of the *Areopagitica*, it is time to turn to an account, or sketch, of those elements in the Christian patristic tradition – generally of the Alexandrian School – that we feel were most important in the elaboration of the *CD*. Our interest will be directed less to specific parallels of vocabulary or argument than to the broader themes, or directions of thought that we take to have been of central importance both to Dionysius and to his “forerunners”. Specifically, the last chapters will be divided into two sections, the first dealing with writers prior to the fourth century, particularly with Origen, and the second with the fourth century, i.e., the Cappadocians, with particular reference to Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, a few words devoted to the mystagogies of Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom, and finally the Syrian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, especially Ephrem and the anonymous author of the *Macarian Homilies*. We intend to devote particular attention to Origen, Evagrius, and the Syrians, an intent that corresponds both to our allocation of space in the first four chapters, and to the fact that, while the Cappadocians have often been referred to in connection with Dionysius by other scholars, neither Origen nor, certainly, Evagrius have received the attention that we feel is their due; and the Syrians none whatsoever. Origen and Evagrius are the only writers whose thought we shall be careful to deal with and to outline as complete systems (although some mention will be made of the Cappadocians in this connection), since it is our contention that their systems, already adaptations of Platonist and gnostic themes, provided the essential ground work for Dionysius' own synthesis.

A. PRE-FOURTH CENTURY

1. The New Testament

Before turning, however, to our consideration of the writers listed above, we feel obliged, by way of a kind of prologue, to glance first of all at the book itself of the Christian revelation. Dionysius does after all write under the name of a disciple of St. Paul (Acts 17:34), and we have already made occasional allusions to the Pauline works. Our attention will therefore be confined largely to the texts traditionally ascribed to St. Paul – although with some mention of other sacred writings, particularly the Johannine books (including Revelation). We shall be making no pretense of either New Testament criticism or of exacting, textual analysis. Our intention is rather simply to draw the reader's attention to certain general themes and terms that might be read as either "susceptible" to a Dionysian interpretation or, at the least, as possible springboards for Dionysian speculation – however distant the modern Biblical critic may feel those speculations to have been from the original writer's intended meaning.

Let us turn first to the adumbrations of Dionysius' negative theology¹. References to God's γνῶσις or σκότος are not (with one exception) present in the NT. They are, however, familiar from the OT. Besides the quotations from Exodus cited in our Chapter IV², we may point as well to Ps 18:11, 97:2, and 139:11-32. In addition, there are the passages from Judges 6:22, 13:22 and Isa 6:5 which parallel Ex 33:20-21. In the NT, we find the assertion, "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18, I John 4:12) as well as the statement in I Tim 6:16 that the Father "dwells in light unapproachable [φῶς ἀπρόσιτον], Whom none has ever seen nor ever will see". Even his relations with men or "providences", his "judgments-and ways", are "unsearchable" and "inscrutable" (Rom 11:33). His love transcends knowledge (Eph 3:19).

On the other hand, there are texts from both Testaments which affirm a more or less exhaustive knowledge. In the OT we would point to such examples as Gen 32:24-30, Ex 33:11, 34:9, Dt 34:10, and Job 19:25-27. Lossky also directs us to the Psalms' frequent allusions to the light of God's Face³. Perhaps the NT's most striking affirmation of this – apparently contradictory – idea comes from the same first epistle of John which we saw above deny the vision of God: ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν (I John 3:2). A similar phrase is given us in I Cor 13:12: "then [we shall see] face to face [πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον]". The Dionysian antinomy, God unknowable *in se* yet mysteriously made known in his energies, is a possible interpretation of these texts. God can give true knowledge of himself, and we stress that knowledge of his ways is, precisely, given: "Thou has hidden these things from the wise and understanding and has revealed [ἀποκαλύψας] them to

1. For our treatment of negative and positive theology in the OT and NT we are much indebted to Lossky's *Vision of God*, 21-26.

2. See above, 170.

3. *Vision of God*, 23, note 7, citing Ps 4:6; 31:16; 67:1; 80:3; and 90:8.

babes" (Matt 11:25). God's wisdom is not human and remains hidden until the time he has chosen to reveal it (especially I Cor 1:18-2:16)⁴. To know God's "ways" at all is, then, by grace somehow to share – participate – in him. We do in fact find "participation" language in Hebrews: in substantive form, μέτοχοι⁵, and in the related verb μεταλαβεῖν⁶. To these examples we might add the κοινωνία of I John 1:3 and 6, the "abiding" of God in the believer of the same Epistle (2:24-25) and the Gospel of the same name (John 15:4-7). There is finally the truly remarkable statement of the (admittedly late) second epistle of Peter: the faithful shall become κοινωνοὶ τῆς θείας φύσεως (1:4).

The last is the only text that speaks of sharing in God's nature, but in the others just cited we might discern at least a certain potential for the Dionysian energies or powers. Similarly, while God's love (ἀγάπη) is above knowledge (Eph 3:14), it is yet as well the "bond [σύνδεσμος]" of all (Col 3:14) – a sentiment certainly echoed in the *DN* – in which all are enabled to share⁷. Because of this sharing, St. Paul can speak of our "cooperation" with God (I Cor 2:12), of God cooperating with us (Rom 8:28) and even – again, a Dionysian theme – of our becoming "imitators [μιμηταὶ] of God" (Eph 5:1). Two of the terms found (and prominent) in the *DN* and the whole *CD*, δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, are also well-represented in the *NT*⁸, and, although certainly without metaphysical overtones, together with such additional phrases as found in I Cor 12:6 or Phil 2:13, "God working all things in us", they would appear at least to leave an opening for the Dionysian distinction. Also striking in this connection is the usage of the terms δόξα and φῶς (and related themes). The latter⁹, while decidedly present in the Pauline material¹⁰, is especially developed in the Gospel and first epistle of John¹¹. The former – and related – term is, however, the most important for our purposes as carrying over from the *OT*¹² the sense of the visible power and splendor of God's theophanies as intimately associated with his presence and the revelation of his being¹³. Thus we discover in the Synoptics the light of the Transfiguration (e.g. Matt 17:2), in John the glory promised the disciples (17:24), in Acts the blinding vision of St. Paul (9:30), in Revelation the glory of God that lights the New

4. See also, for example, Luke 24:19; Acts 1:8ff; and esp. John 14:26; 15:26-27; and 16:13-15.

5. Heb 3:14, we participate in Christ, and 6:4 in the Spirit.

6. Heb 12:10, of God's holiness.

7. See also John 15:9-10; 17:26; and I John, esp. 4:7-12.

8. For δύναμις, see II Cor 4:7; Eph 1:19 and 23; 3:7; Phil 2:13 (esp.); 3:21; and Col 2:12.

The list is not exhaustive.

9. See the relevant article by Conzelmann, *TWNT* IX, 302-349.

10. For example, II Cor 4:12; I Tim 6:16; and esp. Eph 5:8.

11. For example, John 8:12; 12:45; and I John 1:5.

12. Recall, for example, Isa 6:1ff and Ezek 1:28, together with, again, the Exodus theophany (Exod 19:18; 24:16; 33:18ff; 40:34); I King 8:11 at the dedication of the Temple, Ezek again in 1:4ff (the departure of the glory) and 43:2ff (its return).

13. See the relevant article by Kittle, *TWNT* II, esp. 240-250.

Jerusalem (22:3-5), and in the Epistles of St. Paul numerous references to the glory which is to be (and is now) shared with the believers, of which we might take II Cor 3:18 as perhaps the most eloquent: “and we all, with uncovered faces reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [μεταμορφούμεθα] into [his] image [εἰκῶν] from glory to glory”¹⁴. The impression is, again, one of the possibility now opened to us of sharing in something which is proper to the divine mode of being: “His divine power [δύναμις] has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (II Pet 1:3). As the same source goes on to say in his “eyewitness [ἐπόπτης]” account of the Transfiguration (1:16ff), the “power and glory” given to Jesus by the “majestic glory” of the Father has become available, through Christ, to us.

We concluded the last paragraphs with a reference to the Transfiguration both because it recalls us to the passage in *DN I.4* that we have stressed is central to the *CD*, and because it directs us to the person of Jesus Christ. God is “unknowable”, but Jesus has “made him known” (John 1:18). Participation in the divine glory – or power or righteousness, or wisdom – is alone possible through and in Christ. We would like here to point first of all to the “mystery” language which is incontestably part of the Pauline vocabulary. St. Paul’s mystery of salvation, hidden even from the angels and established by God before the ages, is the revelation given in Christ¹⁵. Indeed, this mystery *is* Jesus, “in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden” (Col 2:3), and himself, “through the Church”, the revelation of “God’s manifold wisdom [πολυποίκιλος σοφία] even to the heavenly powers” (Eph 3:10). As to the general meaning of the word, μυστήριον, in antiquity, we may take as adequate to our purposes the definition given by Goodenough:¹⁶ “real mystery in ancient usage ... seems to be distinguished as teaching, with or without rites, which would really lead the ‘initiate’ or ‘disciple’ ... out of matter into the eternal”. We certainly encounter such language in St. Paul: “we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are not seen [τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα], for the things that are seen are transient, but the things unseen are eternal” (II Cor 4:18)¹⁷. For the Apostle, however, this dualism is not rooted in a cosmological reality, i.e., as in the Platonic or generally pagan divide between αἰσθητά and νοητά. The “mystery of God” who is Christ (a person first and not primarily a “teaching”) does not promise a salvation from matter *per se*, but instead – and only – from the world as fallen and subject to him “who has the empire [κράτος] of death” (Heb 2:14)¹⁸, the Devil. Let us recall here not only the Pauline language of “this age” as representing the reign of evil, but the Johannine

14. See also, for example, II Cor 4:4-6; Eph 3:16; Phil 3:21; Col 1:27-28; and Heb 2:9-10.

15. For the true μυστήριον, see Rom 16:25; I Cor 2:6-8; Eph 1:9 and 3:9; and Col 1:26-28 and 2:2-3.

16. E. R. Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo*, 2d ed. (1962) 154-155.

17. In the context of faith, recall also I Cor 13:9-10 and Heb 11:1.

18. See also Rom 5:12-14.

terminology of “this world” and its “prince” (John 12:3). The Christian battle is not with “matter”, or with the world as it issued from the hand of the Creator, but with “spirits”, “principalities and powers” (Eph 6:12) – the hosts of Hell. It is a battle with “flesh and blood” only in so far as the latter have been “infected” or “poisoned” through the Fall (e.g. Rom 7:13-25). All creation awaits the salvation to come (Rom 8:19-25), which, in fact, is already present in the world. While presently “hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3), our salvation remains among us, discernable through faith and real, although unseen (Heb 11:1). This is the Pauline – and not only Pauline but generally NT – mystery: that God, humanity, and the whole of created reality are already reconciled one to another in Christ and, consequently, that humans and their world are already in potential and, through faith, in fact rendered “participants” in the life and glory of God. Where and how? We return to the text we quoted above: the “mystery of God” is now present and revealed “through the Church” and so, we add, in the “mysteries”, the sacraments, all of which are nothing other than the manifestation and operation of Christ, the unique *μυστήριον*.

The reality of the Church in the New Testament, and so the reality of the sacraments, is the reality of the Incarnation. The latter, coupled with the present attendance upon the eschaton and the consequently hidden nature of Christ among us, is again the heart of another key Dionysian expression (which we also discover in the NT): *εἰκλόν*. In the Prologue to John we read that “the Word became flesh and dwelt (lit. “tabernacled”) among us... and we beheld his glory” (John 1:14), and in the accounts of the Transfiguration we find that “glory” irradiating even Jesus’ flesh as the revelation of divinity and a “preview” of the Resurrection – first Christ’s own and then, we may take it, ours. In the Pauline writings we find that Christ is the “*εἰκλόν* of God the invisible” (Col 1:15)¹⁹, and is such because “in him dwells all the fullness of divinity bodily [*σωματικῶς*]” (Col 2:9). Let us emphasize this point: through Jesus, God Incarnate and risen from the dead, the body – and we would say therefore the material creation itself – has become, as it were, adequate to God. There is no absolute and eternal division between the intelligible and sensible worlds, because the mystery of God’s power and glory may now be discerned as irradiating matter itself. Through and in Jesus the sensible world is enabled to become, precisely, an icon. And we can assert that the term in this context is not a purely Dionysian invention; it has its roots in the NT. In Colossians, besides the above citation, we find the biblical author speaking of the Law as being only “shadows of the things to come, that is, the body of Christ” (2:16), and in Hebrews, a deliberate contrast drawn between the shadow (*σκιάν*) of the Law and “the image itself [*αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα*]” of the future good things (10:1). Also important here is the emphasis on the future. If the author of Colossians counsels us to “seek that which is above [*τὰ ἄνω*], not the things of earth” (Col 3:2), he does not then intend his reader to abandon the material

19. See also II Cor 4:4.

universe in a kind of Platonic quest for the ideal realm. He directs us rather towards an eschatological reality. We have, in Baptism, shared in both the death and Resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:1ff). This is, however, a participation that will achieve its manifest culmination only at the eschaton (Col 3:1-3). The icon points both to the present reality of the mystery abiding unseen in the world, and forward to the time when "images" shall vanish and we shall see "face to face" (I Cor 13:12).

Let us return to the notion of the Church. It is in the Church that the mystery is revealed, and the shadows give way to the icon. The Church is itself the icon bearing the mystery. Three terms, body (σῶμα), man [ἄνθρωπος], and temple ναός), appear in the Pauline corpus as expressive of this reality. The first two indicate that the Church is a single organism. It is, quite literally, the body of Christ:²⁰ "All things whether in heaven or on earth are summed up [ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι] in Christ" (Eph 1:10). The body of Christ is "the fullness [πλήρωμα] of him who works all in all". It embraces heaven and earth. It is presently articulated into different functions²¹ – hierarchy, in short – some of which are temporary (i.e., of the present age) and some expressive of permanent differences (I Cor 15:38-42), and it looks forward to the revelation of its glory at the end of time. It is the "new creation" (II Cor 5:17-19) which has overcome the divisions of the Fall. Jesus is the new Adam (Rom 5:15-21). In him we "put on the new man"²², are indeed created anew into "one, new man" (Eph 2:15). It is thus that the former alienation is abolished (e.g. Eph 2:14-22) and that we now, as members of a unique organism animated by the Spirit of God, have "access [προσγωγή]²³ to God". And not only humanity, for, as we noted above, all of creation is present in the body of Christ. Jesus is raised above all the powers of heaven (Eph 1:21), all bow at his name (Phil 2:9-10), and all are reconciled in him (Col 1:15-23). Jesus, his body, is then the "place" where we meet and know both God and his creation, whether of heaven or of earth.

The Church or body of Christ as "place" of encounter leads us to our third Pauline term, the "temple [ναός]" of God. The latter word does not itself appear in this context more than a few times²⁴, but does have important parallel expressions in the words οἶκος and σκηνή, house or tabernacle of God²⁵. We should like to lay particular emphasis on these as pointing to the believers, and particularly suggestive of the worshipping community, as the "place where God and man meet and where we thus participate – however partially in the present age – in a reconciled and renewed creation". The centrality of the Church's

20. For the literal quality of St. Paul's "body of Christ", see the monograph by J. R. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (1952).

21. Rom 12:4-6; I Cor 12:12-13 and 27-31.

22. Col 3:11ff and Rom 6:3-4.

23. For this term, cited so often in the *CD*, see also Rom 5:1; Eph 2:18; Heb 7:19 and 24.

24. See I Cor 3:15-16; II Cor 6:16; and Eph 2:22.

25. See II Cor 5:1; Eph 2:19-22; 4:16; I Tim 3:15; Heb 3:2 and 8:1.

worship at the Eucharist is stressed in I Cor 10:16-17²⁶. The themes of “temple”, “tabernacle”, etc., are taken up especially in Hebrews and that Epistle’s contrast-fulfillment treatment of the Old Testament Temple cult and the sacrifice offered once-for-all by Christ²⁷. Of special note for us is the strikingly Platonizing language used – some of which has already been mentioned in connection with the idea of the icon. The OT Temple and sacrifices belong to the sphere of creatures, are done or made by humans (χειροποίητα – 9:21) and so are only shadows (σκιὰ) or copies (ὑποδείγματα, ἀντίτυπα)²⁸ of the true Temple, and the “introduction to a greater hope”. It is through the latter alone that we may truly draw near to God. Christ entered the Tabernacle which is God’s, not humanity’s, the Temple “not made by hands”, uncreated (οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως) (9:11), the “place” of God himself to present himself before the Father’s face (9:24) and majesty (8:1). The old worship is annulled, and “we have confidence to enter the [true] sanctuary through Jesus and the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain [καταπέτασμα], that is, through his flesh” (10:19-20). The latter is certainly of some relevance to our analysis of the *CD*²⁹. Even more important are the statements that we, the believers, are “the house of Christ” (3:2). On earth “we have no abiding city, but seek the one which is to come” (13:4), possessing meanwhile here below “the icon” of those things (10:1). The relevance to the Dionysian corpus as we have sketched the latter culminates in the twelfth chapter wherein many of the themes discussed in our treatment of the *CD*, especially the *EH* in relation to the *MT*, come together in a way that is more than coincidental:

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness [γνόφος], and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the heavens tremble... But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering [μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων πανηγύρει], and the assembly of the first-born [ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων], and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant (12:18-24).

We shall but point here to the themes of the mountain, the heavenly commonwealth, and the celestial liturgy of the angels of which we are rendered participants through Christ. Of the angels, we note in passing their appearance as well elsewhere in the Epistles as mediators of the Law³⁰, and their ranking beneath Christ³¹.

26. See also I Cor 11:23-26.

27. See esp. chapters 7-10.

28. See 8:4-5; 9:11 and 23-24 and 10:1.

29. See esp. Chapter III above, 148-154, and Chapter IV, 222-229.

30. See Gal 4:19 and Heb 1:14 and 2:2.

31. See Eph 1:21-22; 3:10; 4:10; Phil 2:9-10; 3:21; Col 1:16; 2:20; Heb 1:4 2:8ff; and I Pet 3:22.

The most developed presentation of the heavenly liturgy in which the earthly Church participates we find, however, in the Revelation of John³² – and it is surely no accident that Dionysius includes, as the tenth and last of his *Epistles*, a “letter” written to John at Patmos. The connection with the Church’s worship, particularly with the Eucharist, is established at the book’s very beginning: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day [τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ]” (1:10). The description given in chapters four and five of the court of Heaven gathered around the throne of Glory (especially 4:3ff) is surely to be read as modeled in part on the Christian worship of “the Lord’s day”. The angelic hosts are introduced specifically in 5:11. Indeed the whole of creation [πανκτισμός] “in heaven and in the sea and all therein” (5:13) is introduced in the seer’s vision of the unique liturgy of praise to the Lamb (5:12-13). Moreover, and let us recall here the ἔνθεος πολιτεία of the *CD*’s *Epistle IV* on the Incarnation, the cosmic liturgy becomes at the end of Revelation the vision of the celestial city:³³ the heavenly Temple is as well the new, divine community (πόλις) prepared by God, over which both the Father and the Lamb reign directly and upon which their single light shines without created intermediary³⁴. Of signal significance for us is the suggestion here that the vision of participation in the new creation as one, new commonwealth embracing angels and humans as co-citizens³⁵ – and every created being – is discernable by us, however partially, now in the Eucharistic worship of the Church. For this is indeed precisely the μυστήριον, Christ and his Church embracing and filling all with glory, the same mystery in which the Christian is even now to share and to discern in the Church’s corporate prayer. The believers as the Church, and, particularly, the Church at prayer are the τόπος Θεοῦ and so are the presence now veiled in the world of the new creation in Christ: “He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread” (Luke 24:35).

Returning to Paul’s use of ναός and σκηνή, we also find a second and equally important aspect of the “temple”. It refers to the individual Christian. The believer in I Cor 3:16 and 6:19-20 is personally the “temple of the Holy Spirit” or “of God”. St. Paul speaks in I Cor 5:1 ff. of our earthly tent (σκηνή) being folded up and our hope of being clothed with the house (οἶκος) that God has built for us. Both of these terms hark back to the temple or cult language of the OT. In John 17, Christ declares that he has given to his Apostles the glory that he had with the Father before the worlds (17:5 and 22-24), presumably thus to dwell within them as the divine *kabod* or *Shekinah* dwelt within the holy of holies of the temple in Jerusalem (eg. Isa 6:3-4, or Ezek 40:34). Again, we might recall the Lucan statement that the “Kingdom of God” is “within” (Luke 17:21). The reality of

32. See the study by Erik Petersen, *The Angels and the Liturgy*, trans. Walls (1964) esp ix-x and 1-12.

33. See *Ibid.* ix-x ff for a discussion of the political language of Revelation.

34. Rev 21:23 and 22:3-5.

35. See Rev 19:10 and 22:8 for the twice repeated insistence on no worship being accorded angels.

temple and kingdom is therefore not only, as it were, collective and institutional, but personal. Put another way, and in anticipation of our discussion of the Syrian ascetic tradition, one may speak both of the church as the new world and new creation, and of the human being or human soul as itself a kind of "little church". In Christ both the "collective" and the "individual" become the place of the divine glory as that glory abode and still abides preeminently in Jesus himself, the Word who "tabernacled [ἐσκήνωσεν] among us" and whose glory "we have seen" (John 1:14). The temple as "place" of the divine glory, a theme harking back to the Sinai theophany and thenceforward throughout the sacred history of Israel, therefore applies to the NT texts in three ways: Christ is the temple; the Church is the temple; the believer is the temple³⁶. The mystery of the Incarnate One is thus known in the sacraments and in the heart of the believer. The peaks of Sinai and of Zion, the mountains of God, discover themselves here below objectively at the altar and, subjectively, within the soul.

Summary: It is our contention that the main lines of the *CD* as, of course, we have outlined it are already present in embryo in the NT texts, especially in those which have traditionally been ascribed to the Apostle Paul. Those main lines are: 1) that God is forever transcendent and unknowable in his own being; 2) that he is or rather by his own will has become, nonetheless participable, sharing his "glory", or "light", or "love" or other of his "names" and attributes with his creatures; 3) that, to the fallen world, this sharing in the divine is made possible uniquely through Jesus, who is God in the flesh and whose risen body 4) embraces the whole of created existence, material and immaterial; 5) which – in Dionysius' phrase – "new, theandric" reality is the Church whose presence, while still "hidden" in the present age, is yet realized and discernable in the baptized faithful, and 6) especially within and through their coming together in the Eucharistic assembly. Lastly, 7) the light and glory of Christ also reside within, rest upon the "altar" of, the individual Christian soul which is led to this discovery through its contemplation of, and participation in, the sacraments of the Church.

The points just outlined represent a reasonable, if partial, attempt to see and to present the NT material as a coherent whole. It is our contention that this is the attempt upon which the author of the *Areopagitica* embarked – which, indeed, he himself states as being his express purpose in writing³⁷. We use the word, partial, in order to indicate, first, that we are not asserting that our seven points are inclusive of the complete Pauline (or generally NT) vision, such as the insistence upon the importance of the Cross, the weight of sin, repentance, the struggle of

36. For the Exodus theophany and Israel's worship, see M. Noth, *Exodus: a Commentary* (Philadelphia: 1962) 11-17, and R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Philadelphia: 1965) 17-27 and 113-120. For the temple and glory as related to the NT texts, see M. Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration* (London: 1949, rep. 1967) 9-100, esp. 16-21 and 82-90.

37. See *Ep. VII.1-2* 1080AB, esp. 2.

the life in Christ, etc., which we have noted are not dwelt upon in the *CD*. One might add the personal quality of adherence to Christ and the stress upon Jesus' own person and love for it, save that this stress, especially the portrait of Christ as he lived on earth, is scarcely more a Pauline feature than it is a Dionysian one. St. Paul, as is our author, is more intent upon Christ the *μυστήριον* of God than upon Jesus of Nazareth. In this, we feel, Dionysius is quite the faithful disciple. Secondly, Dionysius has introduced much in the way both of ideas and of vocabulary that is novel to the NT. We feel nonetheless that the honesty and justice of his claims to be both a disciple of St. Paul and a Christian theologian basing himself upon Scripture should be given serious and sympathetic consideration.

The *CD* is, however, the work of a man of late antiquity writing some five centuries later than the authors of the NT. A whole tradition (or, traditions) of Christian life and thought based upon the testimony of the Apostolic witnesses intervenes. The Dionysian *corpus* is no less a reflection and synthesis of this tradition than it is a product of its author's personal meditation on Scripture – or, certainly, of his philosophical training (such as it may or may not have been). We therefore turn now to the examination of certain key contributors to the development of that tradition. We shall concentrate upon them as their writings bear upon the seven points sketched above in order to show them as, each and all, providing the elements from which Dionysius will take in order to build his own system.

2. The Apostolic Fathers and Irenaeus

The author of the *CD* wrote under the name of St. Paul's convert at the Areopagus. He therefore wanted to situate his writings in the first generation after the Apostles. His one citation of a known Church Father by name is of Ignatius of Antioch's *Epistle to the Romans* in *DN* IV.12³⁸. The quotation occasions the Scholiast some difficulties as he is obliged to try to explain how Dionysius could be citing someone who lived some seventy years after Paul's speech in Athens³⁹. It may be a mistake, however, to see Dionysius' allusion as purely in the service of his literary fiction. We believe to the contrary that he in fact intends his readers to pick up on themes present in Ignatius that he feels are basic to his own concerns. In what follows, then, we shall briefly sketch certain aspects of the "Apostolic Fathers", together with Irenaeus of Lyons, that we feel were likely to be of interest to Dionysius⁴⁰.

38. "My eros has been crucified", *Romans* 7 in 709D (157:10-11).

39. *PG* IV 264BC. The commentator solves the problem by moving Ignatius into the 90's A.D.

40. We include Irenaeus, not technically an "Apostolic Father", because of his striking prominence in the *Scholia*. He is cited six times, more than any other Church Father save Origen (nine times) and Basil the Great (eight times). See *PG* IV 176A, 337D, 377B, 537C, 545C, 573D. Perhaps this is due to the Scholiast's desire to show Dionysius as confuting the Gnostics, see *Ibid.* 176A, 181C, 397C, and 545C.

a) Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp

Clement of Rome's *Epistle to the Corinthians* is one of the oldest Christian documents we possess outside of the NT⁴¹. The concern of the letter is precisely with hierarchy, i.e., with the good order of the Church and the permanent authority of its officers. Everything, Clements writes in paragraph 40, is to be done "in order [τάξει]", and the order that he has in mind is specifically the Church's worship as typified by the rites of the OT temple:

For unto the high priest his proper services [λειτουργίαι] have been assigned, and to the priests their proper office [τόπος] is appointed, and upon the Levites their proper administrations [διακονία] are laid. The layman is bound by the layman's ordinances [προστάγμασιν]⁴².

Everyone is "to give thanks in his proper order [τάγματι]... not transgressing the appointed rule of his service [λειτουργία]"⁴³. While the ranks of OT ministers may not necessarily be a picture of the Christian Church at worship, since Clement moves on to cite Jerusalem and the temple specifically, such an inference does not appear to be too improbable in that, following the latter reference, he goes to speak about the Apostolic appointment of "bishops and deacons"⁴⁴, and then insists on the permanent validity of their orders⁴⁵. The erring Corinthians are to "submit [ὑποτάγητε] themselves to the presbyters"⁴⁶. The ecclesiastical ranks, directly connected with the order of the Church's worship, appear thus to be the three orders of bishops, prebyters, and deacons.

There is no question whatever that Ignatius of Antioch, some twenty years later, makes this connection explicitly and often. Indeed, the Eucharist is not only at the heart of his understanding of ecclesiastical order, but is also the key to his reading of God, Christ, the Church, and the spiritual life – roughly our points one, three, and five through seven above. Ignatius is confronted with divisions among the communities he writes to in Asia Minor and Greece, in particular with groups who are advancing a docetic Christology⁴⁷ that has led them both to deny the authority of the local bishops⁴⁸ and to have removed themselves from their eucharist⁴⁹. One paragraph from *Magnesians* expresses his whole response:

41. We shall be using J. B. Lightfoot's translation, *The Apostolic Fathers* I.2 (1898 2d ed.) 5-261 for Clement of Rome, and for the text of Ignatius and Polycarp, *Lettres. Martyre de Polycarpe*, SC 10, ed. P. Camelot (1969). Eng. trans. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: 1980, rep.).

42. *I. Clem* 40, Lightfoot, 30 for English and I.2:123-124 for Greek.

43. *Ibid.* 41 (30; I.2; 125).

44. *Ibid.* 42 (31; I.2; 128-129).

45. *Ibid.* 44 (32; I.2; 131-136).

46. *Ibid.* 57 (37; I.2; 166).

47. See *Ephesians* 7 (Lightfoot, 65; SC 63-64); *Trall.* 9-10 (74; SC 100-102), and *Smyr.* 2-5 (109-110; SC 132-136).

48. *Phil.* 3 (78-80; SC 120-122).

49. *Smyr.* 6 (83-84; SC 138).

Therefore as the Lord did nothing without the Father... so neither do ye anything without the bishops and the presbyters... but let there be one prayer in common, one supplication, one mind, one hope... which is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing better. Hasten to come together all of you to one temple [ναός], even God, as to one altar [θυσιαστήριον], even to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father [ἀφ' ἑνὸς πατρὸς προελθόντα]⁵⁰.

We note the familiar ring of unity, temple, and altar. Everything for Ignatius focuses on the last, the altar. It is there that the revelation is known and declared, and it is there in consequence that Church and believer discover their meaning and coherence. Christ is the altar, the word of the Father's "silence"⁵¹, and himself, as one with the Father, the divine silence:

It is better to keep silence and to be, than to talk and not to be.... He that truly possesses the word of Jesus is able also to hearken unto his silence, that he may be perfect [τέλειος], that through his speech he may act and through his silence he may be known [δι' ὧν σιγᾷ γινώσκεται].

Ignatius thus concludes:

Let us therefore do all things as knowing that he dwelleth in us, to the end that we may be his temples [ναοί] and he himself may be in us as our God⁵².

Our points one, three, and seven appear clearly in these passages. "Silence", σιγή, suggests the divine mystery and transcendence. Yet this same mystery, the very silence itself, is present within the believer in as much as the latter is "temple" – and note that God is called temple in *Magnesians* while the believer is temple here. The two temples, as it were, are brought together in Christ, the "altar" and meeting point of heaven and earth: "The eternal [ἄχρονος], the invisible [ἀόρατος] who became visible for our sakes, the impalpable, the impassible who suffered for us"⁵³. Ignatius scarcely tires of emphasizing the fact of this meeting and its paradox⁵⁴.

The Church's structure and the Eucharist, our points five and six (and the focus of much of Ignatius' effort), follow on this insistence. In a rare trinitarian passage, where we may recall the Church as world and body, he sees the temple of the Church abuilding:

50. *Magn.* 7 (70; SC 84-86).

51. *Ibid.* 8 (71, SC 86).

52. *Eph.* 15 (67; SC 70-72).

53. *Polycarp*, 3 (87; SC 148).

54. See the creedal formularies in *Smyr.* 1-3 (82- 83; SC 132-134), *Trall.* 9 (74; SC 100-102), with their repetitions of ἀληθῶς, and *Eph.* 7 and 18 (65 and 67; SC 62-64 and 72-74).

Ye are stones of the temple, which figured beforehand for a building of God the Father, being hoisted up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit⁵⁵.

The one and the three are further reflected in the disposition and function of the Church's officers, the triad of bishop, presbyters, and deacons. The first is identified with both "the Lord"⁵⁶, and, in a better known passage where all three orders are assigned types, with the Father:

Do all things in godly concord [ὁμονοίᾳ Θεοῦ], the bishop presiding after the likeness of God [εἰς τύπον Θεοῦ] and the prebyters after the likeness of the council of the Apostles, and the deacons... entrusted with the diaconate of Jesus Christ⁵⁷.

One is therefore "to do nothing without the bishop", without whom together with the other orders "the church does not exist"⁵⁸. Wherever the bishop is, Ignatius adds in a famous phrase, there is Christ and the Catholic Church⁵⁹. Recalling the Dionysian hierarch in whom the (or his) whole hierarchy is summed up and made present, Ignatius sees the sacraments depending on the bishop⁶⁰, and it is particularly on the Eucharist that he chooses to focus. The latter is the very glue of the Church. It is the Ignatian ensign against the heretics with whom he is contesting, the one "bread of God"⁶¹ which is the "medicine of immortality and the antidote that we should not die"⁶². It is truly Christ, the body and blood of the son born of Mary⁶³, and through it everything comes together, literally, into one in the celebration under the bishop's presidency:

Be careful therefore to observe one eucharist, for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup of his blood; there is one altar, as there is one bishop, together with the prebyters and the deacons⁶⁴.

Returning to the idea in Ignatius with which we began, the believer as ναός, and at the same time to the Ignatian epistle that we found Dionysius quoting, we discover something of singular interest in the former's understanding of his forthcoming martyrdom. That he looks forward to becoming an "imitator of the passion of my God"⁶⁵ should not surprise. The idea of the martyr as a holocaust

55. *Eph.* 9 (65; SC 64).

56. *Eph.* 6 (65; SC 62).

57. *Magn.* 6 (70; SC 84); see also *Ibid.* 13 (72; SC 90) and *Trall.* 2-3 (72; SC 96).

58. *Trall.* 3 (73; SC 96).

59. *Smy.* 8 (84; SC 138).

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Eph.* 5 (64; SC 62).

62. *Ibid.*, 20 (68; SC 76).

63. *Trall.* 8-9 (74; SC 100-102); cf. also *Smyr.* 7 (84; SC 138).

64. *Phil.* 4 (80; SC 122).

65. *Rom.* 6 (77; SC 114).

goes back at least to the Maccabbees⁶⁶. The remarkable feature, though, is Ignatius' combination of the different themes of martyrdom, sacrifice, and the cross of Christ with the idea of the believer as temple. Earlier, in *Philadelphians* and in the context of warning his readers to keep unity with the bishop, he puts together the ideas of temple and of the *imitatio Christi*: "Keep your flesh as a temple of God; cherish unity [ένωσις]... be imitators of Jesus Christ"⁶⁷. In *Romans* he adds the notes of sacrifice and, specifically, of the Eucharistic offering to the foregoing: "Grant me nothing more than that I be poured out a libation to God while there is still an altar ready"⁶⁸, and then adds:

I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ [καθαρός ἄρτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ]... Supplicate the Lord for me that through these instruments I may found a sacrifice to God⁶⁹.

A few paragraphs later, and indeed following immediately upon the "crucified eros" that Dionysius cites, he repeats this idea, combining references to both Baptism and Eucharist:

There is no fire of material longing in me, but only water living and speaking in me, saying within me 'Come to the Father. I have no delight in the food of corruption.... I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ... and for a draught I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible'⁷⁰.

The revelation of Christ and his presence in the Church at the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop is summed up, recapitulated as it were, in the person of the martyr. The promise of the baptismal waters is brought to term in the imitation of Christ's passion (recall Dionysius and the two "deaths"), and Christ becomes fully present on martyrdom's altar of sacrifice. The martyr, in short, becomes the temple *par excellence*. In a sense, he is at that supreme moment the epiphany of Christ's Church and Kingdom. One might almost speak of the Ignatian martyr as a kind of parallel to the Dionysian "suddenly". Of course, the latter does not involve physical death but, as we shall see below in discussing the early monastic movement and Evagrius, the Church would later discover a "bloodless martyrdom" when Ignatius' fate no longer loomed as a possibility, and the new "athletes of God" would indeed factor into the Dionysian vision.

For now it is enough to note the phenomenon in Ignatius and in his successors. Of the latter, Polycarp of Smyrna is perhaps the most significant. The account of

66. See W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Garden City NY: 1967) 22-57.

67. *Phil.* 7 (81; SC 126).

68. *Rom.* 2 (76; SC 108).

69. *Ibid.*, 4 (77; SC 110-112).

70. *Ibid.* 7 (78; SC 116).

his martyrdom, the *Letter of the Smyrneans*⁷¹, subsequently became the model for countless such accounts to come, the template for the huge *synaxaria* of the Eastern churches. Here we find the same theme as above in Ignatius' *Romans*. The saintly bishop Polycarp is systematically assimilated to the person of Christ, and his death thus to Christ's on the cross. The eucharistic echo is deliberate and much more extended than Ignatius' brief allusions. Polycarp, bound to the stake and about to be set afire, voices a formal prayer whose resemblance to the ἀναφορά of the Eucharistic liturgy is certainly not accidental:

O Lord Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ...
I bless thee for that thou hast granted me this day and hour, that I might receive a portion amongst the number of martyrs in the cup of thy Christ...
May I be received among them in thy presence this day, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice⁷².

The authors of the account then add a paragraph that combines the notes of Eucharist and incense offering. As the the fire builds around Polycarp it forms

... a wall around the body of the martyr; and it was there in the midst...
like a loaf in the oven.... For we perceived such a fragrant smell, as if it were the wafted odor of frankincense or some other precious spice⁷³.

In this instance we might recall both Dionysius' remark in *EH* IV.3.12 that, in Christ our altar, we are all offered and consumed (ὀλοκαυτόμενοι)⁷⁴, as well as his references elsewhere in *EH* IV to the fragrance of Christ.

b) Irenaeus of Lyons

The late second century bishop of Lyons is a kind of compendium of Christian theology, the architect in many respects of the catholic consensus. His *Adversus Haereses*, written against the gnostic movement, would be a sourcebook for subsequent generations, including the Cappadocians in their correction of Origen, and up to Dionysius and his commentators⁷⁵. We shall provide the barest sketch of his thought, seeking to underline those elements of greatest relevance to the *CD*.

In the first book of the *AH* Irenaeus sets out to describe the systems of those who advocate the "false gnosis". He moves in Books II and following to the

71. Again from Lightfoot's translation, 109-117, and the Greek text from *SC* 10, 210-239.

72. *Ibid.* 14 (114; *SC* 226-228).

73. *Ibid.* 15 (114; *SC* 228).

74. 484D (103:5-6).

75. We shall be quoting the translation commonly available in vol. I of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, and referring in parentheses to the ancient language text (mostly Latin translation) of the following volumes from *Sources Chrétiennes*: for Book I of the *AH*, *SC* 264 (1979), ed. Rousseau and Doutreleau; for II, *SC* 294 (1982); for III, *SC* 211 (1974); for IV, *SC* 100 (1965); for V, *SC* 153 (1969).

refutation of his adversaries while providing his own, contrasting account of the Church's faith. His first concern is to criticize the speculative confidence of the gnostic teachers, in particular their respective portrayals of the divine realm or *pleroma*, and he does so by invoking the distance between Creator and creature: "The things established are distinct from him who established them". God alone is uncreated, while everything else stands "in need of him who made them, [and they] must necessarily in all respects have a different term [applied to them]"⁷⁶. This amounts in substance to something like Dionysius' apophatic theology, our point one, though it is quite without the latter's technical apparatus. Most interesting, perhaps, is Irenaeus' accusation that his opponents do little more nor less than project the psyche or structures of the human mind onto the divine macrocosm: "They ascribe those things which apply to men even to the Father of all... [and they] endow him with human affections and possessions"⁷⁷. We might point here to Dionysius' insistence in *DN* V and XI that the *νοητὰ ὀνόματα* do not denote actually extant beings, his reponse to an impulse in late Neoplatonism – the reification of Aristotle's *Categories* in Dodd's phrase – that bore a certain resemblance to the gnostic *mythopoiesis*. For both Irenaeus and Dionysius, in contrast, there is a break or chasm between divine transcendence and everything else.

Filling the gap between Creator and creature, our point two, we find something akin to Dionysius' *δυνάμεις* or *ἐνέργειαι*. One must, says Irenaeus, "attribute the substance of created things to the power [*δυνάμεις*] and will [*θέλημα, βούλησις*] of him who is God of all"⁷⁸. The intelligible names – "intelligence, word, life, incorruption, wisdom, goodness and such like" – do not represent a descending scale of entities, but are instead "the names of those perfections which always exist in God, so far as it is possible and proper for men to know and speak of God"⁷⁹. This might almost have been written against Dionysius' own targets in pagan Neoplatonism. Through his creating and the acts of his mercy the transcendent God has thus "come within reach of human knowledge" though not, Irenaeus adds, "knowledge with regard to his greatness... or with regard to his essence – for that no man measured or handled"⁸⁰. Not known according to his secret being, God is "incomprehensible", but "in regard to his love and kindness, and as to his infinite power [recall Dionysius' *ἄπειροδύναμις*], even this he grants

76. *AH* III.viii.3 (96-97).

77. *AH* II.xiii.3 (114), see also xiii.1 and 4 (108-110 and 116).

78. *AH* II.x.4 (90).

79. *AH* II.xiii.9 (126). On the matter of names, Irenaeus turns in xxx.6 (310-312) to the names of the angels. The gnostics do not know "the numbers of the angels and the ranks of the archangels", nor "the mysteries of the thrones", nor "the differences between the illuminations, principalities, powers and virtues" – something, it must be admitted, that Dionysius does set out to. But of note perhaps is that fact that, if we were to add the Cherubim and Seraphim to this list, the number would come out to be nine, i.e., rather an early witness to the Areopagite's number of angelic orders.

80. *AM* III.xxiv.2 (476).

to those who love him... to see God”⁸¹. The mode of this vision, and the language he chooses to use with respect to it, brings Irenaeus very close indeed to the ruling Dionysian themes of light and glory. No one sees God “by his own power”. The gift comes entirely at the divine initiative; “when he pleases... when he wills and as he wills”⁸². Nevertheless, the whole divine economy has been to this end. In the OT God established the Law, and used things “typical”, “temporal”, “carnal and earthly” in order to lead people back and up to the “real”, “eternal”, “spiritual” and “heavenly”⁸³. At the apex of the ascent there is light:

For as those who see the light are within the light and partake of its brilliancy, even so those who see God are in God and receive of his splendor⁸⁴.

This light or glory, moreover, appears to be connected to the Transfiguration in a way that should clearly recall Dionysius and *DN* I.4. In a passage a little below the one just quoted, Irenaeus points to Christ, and to the purpose of the Incarnation:

The Word was made flesh... that all that exists could see... its King, and also that the paternal light might meet with and rest upon the flesh of our Lord, and come to us from his resplendent flesh, and that thus man might attain to immortality, having been invested with the paternal light⁸⁵.

The unknowable God reveals himself in light through and in the incarnate Word, through the very body or flesh of Christ.

We are thus led to our points three and four: Christ and his body, the Church. Irenaeus is the first to coin the famous formula that Athanasius of Alexandria would later take and use in articulating the idea of deification: “Our Lord Jesus Christ... became what we are, that he might bring us to be even what he is himself”⁸⁶. The Incarnation is first a making visible of the divinity of the Father:

Through the Word himself who had been made visible and palpable was the Father shown forth... for the Father is the invisible of the Son, but the Son [is] the visible of the Father⁸⁷.

In Christ, and more specifically in Christ present in the Eucharist – “the blessing of food and drink” – we thus discover “the Incomprehensible acting by means of the comprehensible, and Invisible by means of the visible”⁸⁸, a dialectic

81. *AH* IV.xx.5 (636-643).

82. *Ibid.* (638-639).

83. *AH* IV.xiv.2-3 (546-547). With this passage we might also recall the Dionysian ἀναγωγὴ.

84. *AH* IV.xx.5 (640-641).

85. *AH* IV.xx.2 (630-631).

86. *AH* V.Preface (14-15).

87. *AH* IV.vi.6 (448-451), see also 3 and 5 (442-443 and 446-449).

88. *AH* III.xi.5 (154-155).

thoroughly familiar to us from the *CD*. It is through the flesh of Christ, as we saw above in reference to the light of transfiguration, that we have been “reconciled... to God the Father”⁸⁹. Christ is therefore not a lesson in divinity nor an exercise in illustrated metaphysics. He is very God among us: “The same being who was laid hold of... and shed his blood... was both Christ and Son of God”⁹⁰, and he became a human being in order to return humanity to the purpose for which it had been created. That purpose was and is nothing other than to be the dwelling place, or temple, of divinity: “For the glory of God is man... and the receptacle of all his wisdom and power is man”. Therefore, the “Word of God... dwelt in man... that he might accustom man to receive God, and God to dwell in man”⁹¹. This is, in sum, Irenaeus’ doctrine of recapitulation, *anakephalaiosis*, based on Eph 1:10. In Christ we are “recreated”, made new or, to recall the language and thrust of the Dionysian writings, gathered up and into unity with God. The following from Book III provides as good a statement as any of Irenaeus’ main theme against his gnostic targets, and in it we may also discern the echoes of Dionysius’ leading emphases: visible and invisible, deification, gathering, and even the note of Christ as the source and principle of the hierarchies of heaven and earth:

[Christ] gathered together all things into himself.... He took up man into himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in himself: so that as in supercelestial, spiritual, and invisible things the Word of God is supreme, so also in things visible and corporeal he might possess the supremacy and, taking to himself the preeminence, as well as constituting himself head of the Church, he might draw all things to himself⁹².

It is therefore in the body of Christ that we and our world discover our vocation and reality. For that body, as Irenaeus remarks in quoting Revelation, is “the tabernacle [and temple] of God, in which he will dwell with man”⁹³.

The Church as Christ’s body is central to the argument against the bishop’s opponents. Here in the Church, he insists, is the vivifying “water from heaven”, the Holy Spirit, given in Baptism;⁹⁴ here the presence and hope of resurrection in the organic unity of Christ, the head, with his members;⁹⁵ here the union with

89. *AH* V.xiv.3 (190-191).

90. *AH* III.xvi.9 (322-327). Note here Irenaeus’ anticipation of the theopaschite formula of the sixth century.

91. *AH* III.xx.2 (388-393).

92. *AH* III.xvi.6 (312-315). See also, for example, xviii.7 (364-371), xxi.10 (427-431) and xxii.4 (442-443), and V.xvi.1 (212-215) among others.

93. *AH* IV.xviii.6 (614-615).

94. *AH* III.xvii.2 (330-335) and xxiv.1 (470-475). Note the characterization of the Spirit as the “ladder of ascent to God” (κλίμαξ τῆς εἰς Θεὸν ἀνόδου): 473:24.

95. *AH* III.xix.3 (380-383).

Abraham and inheritance of the promise;⁹⁶ and here the key to “the treasure”, Christ, hidden in the “types and parables” of Scripture⁹⁷. Irenaeus’ insistence derives from his concern both to defend against gnostic interpretations of Scripture, and to defeat their appeal to a hidden or secret chain of authority. It is not, he reiterates, in some private conventicle or privileged individual that the truth of the Gospel resides, but it is rather in the public and visible Church that the “apostles... lodged... all things pertaining to the truth”⁹⁸, and in particular in “the sucession of the episcopate, [who] have received the certain gift of truth”⁹⁹. The truth, in short, resides in the bishops as the public guarantors of the faith, and we recall Dionysius’ like insistence on the hierarch over and against, especially, the charismatic pretensions of a Demophilus in *Epistle VIII*. Only in the “rule of truth” that bishops preserve, essentially the confession of faith at Baptism, may one discover as well the sense and coherence of Scripture¹⁰⁰.

If the baptismal creed delivered and taught by the bishops provides the key to Scripture, and Baptism itself incorporation into the body of Christ and true “temple of God, then it is the Eucharist (our point six) where Irenaeus sees the whole divine economy summed up and his argument, as it were, made visible. The Eucharist is both the fulfillment of the offerings of the Old Testament dispensation once offered at the temple in Jerusalem¹⁰¹, and the affirmation – against gnostic spiritualizing – that human flesh is capable “of receiving the gift of God, which is life eternal”¹⁰². Recalling Dionysius’ confession in *EH III.1* that it was in the light of the Eucharist that he was given first to understand and be “led up to the vision of the other sacred things”, we find Irenaeus declaring that “our opinion” – i.e., the Incarnation and the redemption of the flesh – “is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion”. He goes on in the same passage to tie his (and our) various threads together:

For we offer to him his own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, receives the invocation of God [and] is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of resurrection to eternity¹⁰³.

96. *AH IV.viii.1* (465-467).

97. *AH IV.xxvi.1* (712-717).

98. *AH III.iv.1* (44-45). See also *I.x.1* (154-159 and Irenaeus’ creed).

99. *AH IV.xxvi.2* (718-719). See, for example, also *III.ii.2* (26-29); *iii.1* (30-31); and *IV.xxxiii.8* (818-821).

100. See again *AH I.x.1* (154-159), together with *viii.1* (112-117); and *x.2* (158-162). Note the use of “image” (εἰκὼν τοῦ βασιλέως), esp. in *viii.1* (15: 791).

101. *AH IV.xvii.5* (592-593).

102. *AH V.ii.3* (34-35).

103. *AH IV.xviii.5* (610-613).

While the specific theme of the believer as “temple” of God, our point seven, does not – to our knowledge – appear in Irenaeus, we still find something like it in that the “fellowship and union of flesh and spirit” is very much like his definition of the human being as created by God. We are properly, according to Irenaeus, a composite of body, soul, and the Holy Spirit¹⁰⁴. The last, of course, does not belong to us by nature. Neither does immortality. We are therefore called from the beginning to an ascent into God through the exercise of that freedom which Irenaeus is particularly concerned to defend against the determinism featured in the gnostic systems¹⁰⁵. The potential for that ascent he seems to equate with the *imago dei* (Gen 1:26) given at creation, while its realization is signaled by the acquisition and gift of God. This is the work that has already been accomplished by Christ¹⁰⁶. But it is up to the believer to make his or her own Christ’s victory and the gift of the “likeness” through willed ascent¹⁰⁷. The body, sharing in this effort, is as much entitled to the glorification to come as the soul¹⁰⁸. Particularly striking, and important with respect to the works of both Gregory of Nyssa and of Dionysius who would follow him in this regard, is the dynamism of Irenaeus’ anthropology. Salvation is, in Christ, an ascent and a progress, even a transition beyond the bounds of created nature into the uncreated that involves the whole human being¹⁰⁹. Moreover, and again anticipating both Nyssa and the Areopagite, this is a progression that appears to have no end:

As God is always the same, so also man, when found in God, shall always go on towards God. For neither does God at any time cease to confer benefits upon or to enrich man, nor does man ever cease from receiving the benefits and being enriched by God¹¹⁰.

The resemblance to Gregory’s *ἐπέκτασις* and Dionysius’ *ἀεὶ ἀνατείνεσθαι* is unmistakable.

Summary: We have taken the occasion at every point in the foregoing to signal parallels with the *CD* as we have outlined the latter. In Clement of Rome’s and Ignatius’ concerns for the church hierarchy, in the latter’s emphasis on

104. See, for example, *AH V.vi.1* (72-81).

105. See *AH IV.xxxvii.7* (938-943) for freedom, *III.xix.1* (372-375) for the ascent.

106. See, for example, *AH V.xxvi.2* (330-337), and for Mary as the beginning of the reversal of the Fall, *V.xix.1* (248-251).

107. Even through “violence” (i.e., to oneself) as Irenaeus, anticipating the use of this text by monastic writers, remarks in quoting Matt 11:12 in *AH IV.xxxvii.7* (938-939), and certainly through martyrdom, *III.xviii.5* (354-359).

108. *AH II.xxix.1* (296). Recall Dionysius’ arguments on behalf of the Resurrection in *EH VII.1 ff.*

109. See *AH IV.xxxviii.3-4* (952-961), especially its conclusion: “We have not been made gods from the beginning... but through his love and his power, he shall overcome the substance of created nature” (961:101-102).

110. *AH IV.xi.2* (500-501).

the incarnate Word, the bread of life, and the Christian martyr, and in the whole sweep of Irenaeus' presentation of the Christian faith we believe that every one of our seven points has been at one point or another addressed. Dionysius' roots lie therefore in both the Scripture and in the very beginnings of the patristic tradition. It is neither accident nor a literary sleight of hand that moves him to quote Ignatius, neither is it merely curious that his Scholiast(s) refers the reader so often to Irenaeus. Yet, though the themes be familiar and the shape of Irenaeus' thought particularly so, it is also the case that the technical vocabulary so prominent in the Areopagite is almost wholly lacking in these writers. The same applies to philosophical concerns. These men are not primarily "in dialogue" with contemporary pagan thought (though certainly they have been impressed by it, as by the very air that they breathe), but are rather addressing debates occurring within the Christian Church. For the roots of Dionysius' language concerning God and the world, as well as for a forerunner of his transformation of the Neoplatonist cycle of abiding-procession-return, we shall have to turn to the first attempts on the part of Jewish and Christian writers to answer the challenge of the philosophers, in particular of the Platonist tradition. We shall thus take up with the Alexandria of the first Christian centuries, and the figures of Philo Judeaus, Clement, and Origen.

CHAPTER VI

ALEXANDRIA

A. THE EARLY ALEXANDRIANS

1. Philo

Although he was a Jew of the first century who had no contact with nascent Christianity, Philo was nonetheless a figure of inestimable importance for generations of Christian thinkers. We shall confine ourselves here chiefly to his thought concerning the first and second of our points listed above.

God in himself, according to Philo, is the uniquely existent one, such that all creation, set beside him, only appears to exist¹. He can never therefore be confused with the attributes of created being, himself not “being” in the same manner as man “nor as heaven nor as world”². We are as creatures confined by the limitations of creaturely existence and thought which we are incapable of transcending³ – at least in the sense of any capacity to pin God down to any single attribute or definition. Our reasoning faculty can, and indeed must, assign him attributes, but this is only to make distinctions “according to each of the divine powers and virtues [δυνάμεων καὶ ἀρετῶν]”. God is, truly, both “good [ἀγαθός] and creator [ποιητῆς] and generator of all things, and providential with regard to what he has made, both savior and benefactor, full of all beatitude and blessedness”⁴. Yet, in himself, “it is not possible to assign truly a proper name to him who is”⁵. God is nameless, ineffable⁶, “older than the one and the world and the beginning”⁷. The most that is then open to the human mind seeking the essence (οὐσία) of the divine which is “formless [ἄειδῆ] and invisible [ἀόρατον]” is “to comprehend that God in his own being is incomprehensible [ἀκατάληπτος] and... to see that he is

1. *Quod det Potiori Insid Soleat*, 165.

2. *De Imm. Dei*, 62.

3. *De Sac. Abel.*, 94-95.

4. *De Spec. Leg.*, 29.

5. *De Mig. Abr.*, 11.

6. *Ibid.* 14.

7. *Ques. et Sol. in Exod.*, 68.

invisible”⁸. We can, in other words, know “only *that* he is, not *what* he is”⁹. His existence (ὑπαρξις) is revealed to us while his essence (οὐσία) remains forever inaccessible¹⁰.

The “revealed” above indicates an important feature of Philo’s God: he is not simply “the philosophers” cause, αἴτιον, but is rather the living God of the OT, creator and benefactor. If indeed he is nameless in himself, then it is also true that he, the God of the patriarchs, “has granted to the race of men a proper title [‘God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’] in order that, having a refuge in intercession and supplication, they might not be without share of hope”¹¹. Yet, and Philo is careful to note this, the stress must be placed on the fact that this “naming” is an act of grace. We would have no dependable knowledge of God had he not “revealed” and “manifested” himself¹². Neither is this grace of self revelation a matter limited to patriarchs and prophets. However uniquely authoritative the latters’ experiences may have been, still

the quest for God who is cause of all... is never fruitless, he himself being by nature gracious, comes forward in all-pure graces [παρθένοις χάρισι] and shows himself to those striving to behold [him], not indeed as he is in himself – for this is impossible... but as is allowable for created nature [γεννητὴ φύσις] to attend to the inconceivable power [ἀπερινόητη δύναμις]¹³.

It is thus proper for Moses, the paradigm of all such human striving, to pray “to learn from God who God is”¹⁴, and to have his prayer answered. He is not, of course, given to look upon God’s essence, but is granted the vision of God’s “back”, i.e., that which surrounds God, for “he who wills to behold the ruling οὐσία will be blinded by the surrounding brilliance of the rays [τῷ περιανγεί τῶν ἀκτίνων]¹⁵.

The expressions above involving light, “brilliance” and “rays”, bring us to the second of our two points: Philo’s God is transcendent, “above place and time... both over and outside of created nature”, yet he “has no less filled the world with himself”¹⁶. His God is, as Goodenough puts it¹⁷, in relation with the world “in

8. *De Abrahamo*, 51.

9. David Gendle, *The Apophatic Approach to God in the Early Greek Fathers*, D.Phil. (Oxford: 1974). I am indebted to Dr. Gendle’s work for the greatest part of my references for Philo and Clement as well as for the manner of my treatment.

10. *De Imm. Dei*, 62.

11. *De Abrahamo*, 51.

12. *Ibid.* 80.

13. *De fuga*, 141.

14. *Ibid.* 164.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *De Post. Cain.*, 14.

17. E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light. The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (1935) 11.

spite of the fact that he is essentially beyond relation". If the problem is similar to the one we outlined concerning the *CD* at the beginning of our first chapter, then so is the solution. The vocabulary of "rays", etc. provides the key. To continue with Goodenough: "the sun was taken as the figure... Independent of the world it sends out a great stream of light and heat which makes life possible upon earth. This stream may be called a stream of light... heat... life or creation. But the stream itself is greater than any one of these single aspects, since it includes them all... not the sun, yet it is in a sense the projection of the sun to us... an ἀπαύγασμα"¹⁸. If, then, God "has filled the world with himself" while remaining transcendent, that is because, his essence ever unknowable, he has yet "extended his own powers [δυνάμεις] through all things unto the very limits [of creation]"¹⁹. The distinction energy or δύναιμι/essence is quite unmistakable: "He who is himself is both distant and most near, at once apprehended [ἀπτόμενος] by his creating and disciplinary δυνάμεις which exist close [πλησίον] to each [creature], and most distant, having expelled [ἀπεληλακώς] the creature from his nature as it is [κατὰ τὸ εἶναι]"²⁰. Recalling our discussions of the NT and of Dionysius, there are two other terms that we should note in connection with the δυνάμεις: "light [φῶς]", whose paradigm Philo finds in the first of the powers, God's Logos²¹, and "glory [δόξα]". It is the "glory of God" which is about him [περί σε] that Moses begs to see²². The glory is furthermore explicitly distinguished from God's οὐσία²³, and just as explicitly equated with the δυνάμεις²⁴ – which, it is added, are as well themselves incomprehensible (ἀκατάληπτος) as to their proper existence²⁵.

Examples could be multiplied, but we wish here to draw attention only to a few additional points bearing on Philo's names for these powers and their relation to us, in pursuit of our endeavor to illustrate the clear parallels with Dionysius. Above we noted that, according to Philo, God's existence may be known (ὅτι ἐστίν) but not his essence (τί ἐστίν). The ὑπαρξίς is equated with the δυνάμεις: "My existence you behold", God says to Moses, and Philo goes on to show that this "existence" is equivalent to the "powers" and not to the essence²⁶. It follows that – and here we recall Dionysius on the "Names" and Providence – the names "God" (without the article)²⁷ and "Lord"²⁸ are properly applied to God as he has "extended" himself in making and traversing his creation.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *De Post. Cain.*, 14. See also, for example, *De Conf. Ling.*, 137.

20. *Ibid.* 20.

21. *De Somnis*, 75.

22. *De Spec. Leg.*, 45.

23. *Quest. et Sol. in Exod.*, II.45 and 47.

24. *Ibid.* and *De Spec. Leg.*, 45-47.

25. *De Spec. Leg.*, 47.

26. *De Post. Cain.*, 168-169. See Chapter I above, 72-73.

27. *De Conf. Ling.*, 137.

28. *Quis Rerum Div.*, 170.

In connection with the usage of titles in the singular for the apparently plural powers, we should note that, while Philo does give names to the powers on a descending level – e.g. the “kingly”, the “creative”, etc.²⁹ – this is to be understood as no more than a convenience of thought or language, *κατάχρησις ὀνομάτων*³⁰. They are not separate and independent realities in as much as the “streak of light” is finally to be apprehended as a oneness within “its multiple functions and manifestations”³¹. Philo has a “collective term for immaterial reality”³², for this unity of the stream: the Word, Logos, of God. His Logos is in one place called the “charioteer” of the subordinate divine powers and image (*εἰκὼν*) of God³³, in another place “the truly seminal substance of existing things” and source or “spring” of the powers enthroned above the “ark” of the intelligible world³⁴. It is moreover itself “invisible” and “formless”³⁵, “ineffable... inconceivable and incomprehensible”³⁶. While the Logos is God’s dwelling-place, his projected presence, both “eternal archetype and also eternal activity” of the divine, it is still “not a personal reality”³⁷. Its existence is only a relative one, “like the existence of a sunbeam or speech which is relative to its source”³⁸. Philo’s Logos, in other words, is not unakin to Dionysius’ *πρόνοια*: the single procession of God’s activities, God in action but not in essence³⁹.

The Logos, and so the powers or “names” gathered in it, is then the “place” of encounter with God, the mystery which Revelation has enabled us to discern: “for [Scripture] says: ‘they saw the place where stood the God of Israel [Ex 20:24]’ in which alone it was permitted to offer sacrifice”⁴⁰. This is the vision of God’s “is-ness”, *ὑπαρξις*, which is accorded Moses:⁴¹ the revelation of the divine glory “surrounding [*περὶ*] God” that marks the limits of vision and knowledge – though not of comprehension, for the latter is surpassed in the encounter with the *δυνάμεις*⁴². Beyond this, “there is only the dazzling darkness of unknowing”, the core of the mystery which remains forever inaccessible⁴³. Thus, when even Moses

29. *De Abrahamo*, 120.

30. Goodenough, *Introduction*, 110.

31. *Ibid.* 108.

32. See *De Abrahamo*, 121; also: *Ques. et Sol. in Exod.*, 62 and 68; *Vit. Moys.*, II.99.

33. *De fuga*, 101.

34. *Quest. et Sol. in Exod.*, 68.

35. *De Mig. Abr.*, 6.

36. *De Mut. Nom.*, 15.

37. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, vol. I, 99.

38. Goodenough, *Introduction*, 108-109.

39. However, for additional complexities in Philo’s notion of the *δυνάμεις*, see Goodenough, *Light, Light*, 37ff, and our own discussion of Dionysius’ *πρόνοια* in Chapter I above, 61-66.

40. *De Somnis*, 62-63.

41. *De Post. Cain.*, 167-169; in this and the succeeding paragraphs, recall *MT* I.3 1000C-1001A.

42. *De Spec. Leg.*, 145ff.

43. Gendle, *Apophatic*, 192-194.

himself is said to enter “the darkness [γνόφος] where God was”, it is still only “the innermost and formless ideas [ἐννοιαί]” about God⁴⁴, the realm of the divine forms and ideas⁴⁵, which is opened to his gaze, if not to his understanding⁴⁶. The “place” of God or divine Logos thus represents – in yet another term we have encountered in the *MT* – the “very peaks [ἄκρότητες] of that which is about the Existing One”, the furthest extent of the contemplation of divinity allotted to each according to his capacity⁴⁷. Beyond this “place” created natures cannot go. The mystery of divinity remains in its depths something we may only glimpse, as it were, “from afar”, always “unnameable” and “ineffable”⁴⁸.

Before leaving Philo, we wish briefly to note certain other elements present in his writings. We might point first to the function he has given the angels as viceroys and mediums of the powers to us⁴⁹ through, for example, mediating revelation via dreams and visions⁵⁰ – although Philo does take care to say that God can and does act to show himself without their intervention. The apparition to Moses of the burning bush is another striking example of, according to Philo, angelic visitation. The prophet’s encounter with this angel is described in language recalling exactly that of the *CD*, the angel appearing as “a most divine image [θεοειδέστατον ἄγαλμα]”, “the most brilliant light [φῶς αὐγοειδέστατον]”, and finally as an “image of him who is [εἰκὼν τοῦ ὄντος]”⁵¹. Secondly, the revelation that comes to us through such mediators (and God’s direct action), for Philo always in the scriptures, is one bearing a fundamentally spiritual or noetic content. It affords its initiates the apprehension of intelligible realities: “they are companions of the soul [ψυχῆς ἑταῖροι] who are enabled to converse [ἐνομιλεῖν] with spiritual [νοηταί] and bodiless natures”⁵², and lead finally to the penumbra of light about God. Thus, thirdly, Scripture becomes an instrument of grace operating on different levels. It is the historical record of God’s actions for his people, moral and didactic for those in need of discipline and amendment of life, and, at its deepest and “truest” level, it is the means whereby one may be brought to the intuition of, and communion in, that which is not of the created world⁵³. In other words, it requires, insists on, the anagogical approach. Words and rites become sacraments, μυστήρια⁵⁴. Now there is certainly no question but that Philo’s treatment of the Jewish holy books, his whole attitude as well as his vocabulary,

44. *De Post. Cain.*, 14.

45. *De Spec. Leg.*, 48.

46. *Ibid.* 49.

47. *Quod Deus Imm.*, 77; see *MT* 1.3 (1000C).

48. *De Somnis*, 66-67.

49. For example, see *De Abrahamo*, 115.

50. *De Somnis*, 190.

51. *Vit. Moys.*, I.66; see our Chapter III above, 143-145.

52. *Quod Deus Imm.*, 155.

53. See Goodenough, *Introduction*, 158-159.

54. *Ibid.*

owed a very great deal, indeed, to his Hellenistic environs⁵⁵. He was decidedly, in Inge's judgment, "a child of his age"⁵⁶. But it would be an injustice to underrate him in his commitment, however anxious he was to show "the Road [via the OT] to the Greek Absolute", to provide "a vindication of the unique truth of Judaism"⁵⁷. Goodenough⁵⁸ has noted both that Philo's "borrowed [from the Greeks] concepts are rooted in the Jewish Scriptures", and that his "use of the Powers is on a far higher plane than the parallels advanced from magic and the Hermetica". For our own part, we would point both to the latter scholar's own theory, as presented in *By Light, Light*⁵⁹, of a "mystery" tradition already well-established in (especially) the Alexandrian Jewish community prior to Philo, and to the terms of Philo's vocabulary found in the NT, e.g. allegory, type, shadow, parable, etc.⁶⁰ as indicative of an approach toward the mystery of God revealed in Scripture that we feel has too often been dismissed as alien eisegesis. A more balanced approach would do much – not only for a proper appreciation of Philo – indeed of the NT itself and the nature of the Christian revelation – but, in our case, of the Dionysian writings.

One last citation of Philo remains before we bid him farewell⁶¹. While discussing the rites of the tabernacle as described in Exodus 29, and the vestments of the high priest, Philo goes on to draw two parallels: one between the Logos and the earthly celebrant of the sacrifices, and the other between both the foregoing and the human soul. The passage deserves citation in full:

For there are, as is evident, two temples [ἱερόα] of God, one of them this universe, in which there is also as High Priest his First-Born, the divine Word, and the other is the real man; the outer and visible image [μίμημα αἰσθητόν] of whom is he who offers the prayers and sacrifices handed down from our fathers, to whom it has been committed to wear the aforesaid tunic, which is a copy and replica of the whole heaven [i.e., the breastplate and jewels of the high-priest reflect the constellations], the intention of this being that the universe [κόσμος] may join with man in the holy rites [συνιερούργη] and man with the universe [καὶ τῷ παντὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος]⁶².

55. See esp. Goodenough, *Light, Light*, 20ff.

56. Inge, *Phil. of Plot.*, vol. I, 98.

57. See Goodenough, *Light, Light*, 47, and, for a particularly vigorous defense (against much of Goodenough) of Philo's essential Jewishness and faithfulness to the Rabbinic Tradition, the study by V. Nikiprowetsky, *Le Commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: 1977).

58. Goodenough, *Light, Light*, 44-45.

59. *Ibid.* 95.

60. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Vol. I (1956) 41.

61. I am obliged to Dr. K. McVey for kindly directing me to this text, and for sending me a photocopy.

62. *De somnis* I.215. For other references to the microcosm theme in Philo, see J. Laporte, "Philo in the Tradition of Biblical Wisdom Literature", in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. R. L. Wilken (Notre Dame: 1975) esp. 121-122.

This is striking, indeed. Were we to substitute Christ and Church for Logos and universe (ὁ κόσμος, τὸ πᾶν), we should come very close to Dionysius, in particular to our point seven above. The earthly priest and worship at the tabernacle is an image linking the cosmic liturgy celebrated by God's "first born" [πρωτόγονος] Word with the inner liturgy of the human soul. The latter is thus a "little tabernacle", a true microcosm. We shall find something like this again in Clement below, and again in Evagrius, but – and although Dionysius had read all three men⁶³ – we shall have to wait for our discussion of the Syrian tradition, particularly Macarius and the *Liber Graduum*, to discover the key development of this idea that we believe the Areopagite took and used for his presentation of "our hierarchy".

2. Clement of Alexandria

With Clement of Alexandria we encounter, citing Henri Marrou, "the decisive turning-point when extends the direct road of Christian Hellenism: that of the Fathers of the Golden Age (IVth-Vth centuries), that of all Byzantine culture..." and certainly, that of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*⁶⁴.

Clement ascribes to God the usual attributes of "justice", "goodness", and "unity"⁶⁵, and makes it a point against the Gnostics that the same Good and Just Father is the Creator and demiurge⁶⁶. If God is one, however, he is "also beyond [ὑπέρ] the One and above [ἐπέκεινα] the monad"⁶⁷. Neither do form (σχῆμα), motion, rest, space or time apply to him who is beyond [ὑπεράνω]... name and intellection⁶⁸, "infinite [ἄπειρος]... both formless and nameless"⁶⁹. The apophatic approach is thus delineated in a manner recalling Philo and anticipating Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius. All names reflect created being, Clement continues⁷⁰, and all are therefore inadequate to God who is uncreated. They are given us, then, in concession to the limits of our science (ἐπιστήμη) and the needs of our reason (διάνοια) in order to prevent it from helpless wandering. In one striking example⁷¹ of apophaticism, reminiscent of the *MT*, Clement proceeds by analysis, systematically removing (ἀφελόντες) the dimensions of depth, height and breadth belonging to an object in physical space in order to arrive at a point (σημεῖον) having only position (θέσις). Remove "position", we are told, and you have the intuition of a monad (μονάς). This rather arid academic exercise is not offered as

63. Thus see the Scholia: *PG* IV 241A and 528A for Philo; 228A, 380A, 421C, and 573D for Clement; and 76D-77A, 172A, 252A, and 332C for Evagrius.

64. H. Marrou, "Introduction", *Le Pédagogue* (SC 70) 68.

65. *Pédagogue*, 71:2-4 and 88:2-3.

66. *Pédagogue*, 72:3-73:1.

67. *Ibid.* 71:4.

68. *Stromateis*, V.11 (*GCS* 71:4-5).

69. *Ibid.* V.12 (81:6).

70. *Ibid.* (81:4-82:1).

71. *Ibid.* V.11 (71:2-3); compare Albinus, *Epitomé* (ed. Louis) X.5.

an equivalent to the vision of God. It is instead an illustration of the necessity, in approaching God, to “take away everything [ἀφερόντες πάντα] which is proper to embodied – and bodiless” creation. Only then, still not at the summit, can we

cast ourselves upon the greatness of Christ that, by holiness [ἀγιότητι], we may proceed thence to the abyss [εἰς ἀχανές], led somehow to the intuition [νόησις] of the Father⁷².

Even then, we know “not what he is, but what he is not”.

Besides his Trinitarian subordinationism⁷³, the long passage above reveals Clement’s emphasis on the necessity of “grace... [in order] to know the unknowable [τὸ ἄγνωστον νοεῖν]”⁷⁴. We note the use of such expressions as “concessions”, “gifts”, used above in reference to the names of God. Clement insists that God must reveal himself to us. We would know nothing of him, have no names, were it not for his οἰκονομία τῆς ἀληθείας⁷⁵. Knowledge of God is specifically a grace (χάρις), coming to us “from him through the Son”⁷⁶. Relatedly, he is “knowable only by his power [τῇ παρ’ αὐτοῦ δυνάμει]” of which the names constitute the revelations⁷⁷.

Here again we encounter the distinction, so important in Philo, between the essence or unknowable being of God in himself and his “power”. We find it in fact expressed in almost identical (or, borrowed) terms. God’s δύναμις bridges the absolute gap between created (τὸ γέννητον) and uncreated (ὁ ἀγέννητος): “for [God] being himself most distant has drawn most near... far away according to essence [κατ’ οὐσίαν]... most near by [his] power, in which all things are embraced”⁷⁸. Although it is beyond all names⁷⁹, the virtue or power of God is still adumbrated in the names of its attributes, such as σοφία⁸⁰, or πίστις⁸¹, or – referring to the deification of the creature which cannot be a sharing in essence – will (θέλημα)⁸². Knowledge of God is thus the gift of God which is himself, which is light: “the divine δύναμις comes to us in the manner of light [καθάπερ φως] penetrating the soul entire”⁸³. Or, again familiar from Philo, Clement will speak in terms of Moses and Sinai, of the encounter with the Unknowable in darkness (γνόφος)⁸⁴. Following Philo, he understands this expression as indicating divine

72. *Ibid.*

73. See Lossky, “Apophysis and Trinitarian Theology”, 23.

74. *Stromateis* V.12 (82:1). Note that Clement cites here from Acts 17:22ff.

75. *Ibid.* V.14 (134:3).

76. *Ibid.* V.11 (71:5).

77. *Ibid.* V.12 (82:2).

78. *Ibid.* II.2 (5:4).

79. *Ibid.* V.13 (83:1).

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.* II.11 (49:1).

82. *Ibid.* II.16 (75:2 – all 74:1 through 75:2 is an anti-Gnostic polemic).

83. *Ibid.* VII.7 (PG IX 453A).

84. *Ibid.* II.2 (GCS 5:6).

incomprehensibility, “the sacred and formless notions [ἔννοιαι]” of τὰ περὶ Θεόν⁸⁵, the “secret place” of encounter⁸⁶. We will find the use of περὶ with the accusative to indicate the δυνάμεις, or the “names”, again in Gregory of Nyssa.

Like Philo, too, Clement discovers the unity of the divine powers in the Logos save that, following Christian revelation, God’s Word has acquired a definite, hypostatic character. He is the “image” and “true Son” of the Father, “archetypal light of lights”⁸⁷. All the powers are gathered in the Son who is yet inexpressible (ἀπαρέμφοτος) by any one of the benefactions associated with his δυνάμεις⁸⁸. Clement uses the image of the circle’s center and its radii for the Word as the one in whom the many, i.e., the names of God, are held together⁸⁹. The Logos is thus also the one through whom the ineffable Father descends into the created manifold⁹⁰, the intermediary position, in other words, of Mid-platonism. If the Father remains ever an impenetrable mystery, the Son – and here is the person of Christian tradition – is “the Father’s face [πρόσωπον]... initiator [μνητής]” into his character⁹¹. The Word is the active and personal power of God in creation, the Father’s all-ruling will⁹². The latter we quote from Clement’s argument, against the Gnostics, in favor of divine providence as evidenced not only in the salvation announced in Scripture, but as well in the ordered and visible creation⁹³. Providence is, indeed the Logos himself, who fashioned creation in contemplation of the Father⁹⁴, who revealed himself in the Incarnation⁹⁵, who is the teacher (διδάσκαλος) and the content (γνώρισμα) of his lessons⁹⁶.

The Pedagogy, a key term for Clement, of the Word teaches piety, brings to knowledge of the truth, leads up (ἀγωγή) to heaven and is manifested in us through “holy actions and the vision [ἐποπτεία] of God”⁹⁷. It is ever the work of the Son⁹⁸, revealing the Father in created being and in history. Humans are enabled to receive this instruction in as much as they bear “the image of the image” of God. This “image of the image” cannot, Clement stresses⁹⁹ be sensible (αἰσθητόν), but, like God himself must be “spiritual [νοητόν]”. It is through “the

85. *Ibid.* See also V.12 (78:2-3).

86. *Ibid.* VII.7 (PG IX, 464D-465A).

87. *Le Protrepique X* (SC 2, ed. Mondésert, 98:4).

88. *Stromateis* IV.25 (GCS 94:5-6).

89. *Ibid.*

90. *Protrepique I* (6:4).

91. *Stromateis* V.16 (83:6-84:1).

92. *Ibid.* V.1 (6:3).

93. *Ibid.* (6:1-3).

94. *Stromateis* V.6 (38:7).

95. *Ibid.* (39:1).

96. *Ibid.* V.1 (7:8).

97. *Pédagogue* (53:3-54:1).

98. *Ibid.* (1:1-2).

99. *Protrep.* IV (51:6).

mind which is in man [ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ]” that he is likened (παρεικαζόμενος) to God the Word¹⁰⁰. Our mind, or reason, is the place of encounter¹⁰¹. All this sounds, of course, very “Greek” indeed, but we should take care not to understand “mind” or “reason” here as simply the process or capacity for discursive thought, for it touches after all on the nature of the Word¹⁰².

Clement does, however, have a justification for the echoes of Plato we may discern in his writing. He sees no reason why the Word’s instruction must be limited to the canon of Scripture. God’s beneficence had no time of beginning. His good words are impartial, and he is Lord both of the Scripture and of that instruction, whether among Greeks or barbarians, which leads to righteousness¹⁰³. Clement will go so far as to suggest that the Greeks’ philosophy constitutes a kind of covenant: the Greeks received their philosophers from God as the Jews did their prophets¹⁰⁴ – although the latter enjoy priority (the pagans stole from Moses¹⁰⁵). Both Jews and Greeks thus discover their purpose and meaning in Christ, and Clement (and the Church) is freed to employ the language of pagan philosophy.

This freedom, though, never obscures the priority assigned to Scripture as key to the Logos’ pedagogy in history or the latter’s climax, the Incarnation. Clement, speaking here of the Old Testament, distinguishes four levels of meaning:

The historical and... matter concerned with moral behavior... the priestly [τὸ ἱερουργικόν], which is of natural contemplation [φυσικὴ θεωρία]... and the theological, i.e. the vision [ἐποπτεία] which, as Plato says, is of the mysteries which are truly great¹⁰⁶.

The historical, or lowest, level enables him to explain the often embarrassing expressions of OT history as the work of the Logos necessarily accommodating himself in a direct and personal manner to the needs of Israel in order to prepare it for the revelation of himself¹⁰⁷, and so as an expression of his active and personal love, τὸ φιλόανθρωπον αὐτοῦ¹⁰⁸. The other three levels argue of course, like Philo¹⁰⁹, for allegory. They also adumbrate the later πρακτικὴ - θεωρία φυσικὴ - θεολογία of an Evagrius. Clement indeed lays the groundwork here for the ἀναγωγή we find in the *CD*: the believer begins with the literal and obvious, but

100. *Ibid.* X (98:4); see also *Strom.* V.14 (94:5).

101. *Ibid.* VI (68:4).

102. See Marrou on λόγος, “Introduction”, *Péd.*, 8.

103. *Strom.* VI.8 (*PG* IX 285B).

104. *Ibid.* VI.5 (*GCS* 42:1ff).

105. For example, *Ibid.* V.11 (67:3).

106. *Ibid.* I.28 (176:1-3).

107. See, for example, *Pédag.* VII (61:1), VIII (68:1), and VIII (70:3).

108. *Ibid.* VIII (68:1).

109. *Strom.* V.11 (68:1-3); compare Philo, *De Sac. Abel.*, 95 and 98.

he is called to proceed to that which is beyond the literal, suggested by it, and unseen, the "mysteries". The φυσικὴ θεωρία, for example, we find in Clement's equation of the Old Testament Temple with the κόσμος νοητός "hidden from the many"¹¹⁰, and the ἐποπτεία or θεολογία in his account of Gen 22:3ff:¹¹¹ Abraham's vision of the τόπος Θεοῦ, to which the Patriarch has been led by the angels (δι' ἀγγέλων μυσταγωγεῖται).

The unseen world, then, reveals itself in and through scripture. For Clement that world does include the angelic hierarchies and, particularly in the strange *Excerpts from Theodotus*, in a manner remarkably reminiscent of the CD¹¹². They form a hierarchy¹¹³. They celebrate the eternal liturgy¹¹⁴ and, unlike Dionysius, they enjoy now what the elect will enjoy at the end, i.e., we shall ascend through their ranks¹¹⁵. They finally, as we have noted, aid in the transmission of God's gifts to humanity.

Still, for Clement it is always the Word of God who is source, goal, and agent in the illumination of humans and angels. He is the "hidden angel [μυστικὸς ἄγγελος]" of the OT¹¹⁶ and revealed as Jesus in the New. It is he whom Jacob saw and the Gospels proclaim¹¹⁷. God's dispensation knows its fulfillment in the Incarnation which promises, and provides for, the complete accomplishment of our education: "the Word of God became man in order that you may learn from a man how a man may become God"¹¹⁸. Our deification is effected through Jesus the teacher, who has shown us how we are to live, and Christ the Logos who has created us and opened for us a share in his glory through becoming human. He is our ἀρχὴ and our τέλος¹¹⁹.

The mystery of the Word Incarnate and present in the world is realized, now, in the Church which is the expression of God's will (βούλημα) for the salvation of the world just as creation itself is the actuality of his will to create¹²⁰. It is the presence, now, of the eschatological Kingdom. In, for example, an exquisite passage from *The Pedagogue*¹²¹, Clement describes how the Church, even while patiently awaiting the parousia, knows in itself the presence of Christ and the joy of his reign. Later in the same treatise¹²² he asks Christ to "shepherd us to your

110. *Ibid.* V.6 (35:3-6); compare Philo, *De Vit. Moys.* II.102.

111. *Ibid.* V.11 (73:3-74:1).

112. See *Extraits de Théodote* ed. Sagnard (SC 23) 9; 11:1-4; 12:1-2 (esp.); and *Strom.* VII.2, together with Daniélou in comment upon the latter, *Les anges*, 114.

113. *Extraits* 12:1-2.

114. *Ibid.* 11:4; 27:3; and esp. 27:4-6.

115. *Ibid.* 11:1 and 10:5.

116. *Pédag.* VII (59:1).

117. *Ibid.* (57:1-3).

118. *Protrep.* I.8.4 (SC, 63).

119. For example, *Ibid.* I.7.3 (SC, 61); *Pédagog.* XI (97:3); *Excerpta* 19:1-5; and the debate, Marrou, "Introduction", 29 vs. Sagnard, "Introduction", 18-19.

120. *Pédag.* VI (27:2).

121. *Ibid.* V (22:3-23:1).

122. *Ibid.* VI (27:2).

holy mountain [τὸ ἅγιόν σου ὄρος], the Church, which is exalted above the clouds and touches the heavens". Here the image of the Church joining earth and heaven, as well as the "mountain" theme, would suggest to us themes we underlined in our discussion of Dionysius¹²³. Concerning mountains, the Transfiguration on Thabor to which we have given such prominence in the *CD* is discussed in the *Excerpts*¹²⁴ in a manner remarkably reminiscent of *DN* I.4: the flesh itself of the Savior becomes, through his grace, transparent to his glory and prefigures our own glorification through participation in him.

Of the sacraments, point six of our outline concluding Chapter V above, Clement says rather little. He speaks in one place of Baptism¹²⁵ as illumination (φωτισθεῖς) and perfection (τελείωσις). Elsewhere¹²⁶, he makes a reference to the Eucharist in writing of the "nourishment [τροφή]" the Logos provides the believer, i.e., his "flesh" and "blood", which Clement goes on to identify with, respectively, λόγος and πνεῦμα: "the nourishment, which is to say the Lord Jesus, which is to say the Word of God, is spirit enfleshed [πνεῦμα σαρκούμενον] and hallowed, heavenly flesh". Still more forceful are passages to be found, again in the *Excerpts*, where the connection between Word of God, Eucharist, body of Christ and Church are rendered quite explicit¹²⁷. From what appears, then, it does seem that his views are in harmony with what we have noted in the NT and that they point as well toward the *CD*.

In connection with our point seven, we turn briefly to Clement's notion of the Christian "gnostic" and the latter's appropriation of the mystery revealed in Christ. We noted above that our potentiality for the encounter with God is "located", as it were, in the νοῦς. Clement's Platonism is very much to the fore here, for if the good man is "deiform [θεοειδής], like God [θεοείκελος]", God is also in the form of man (ἄνθρωποειδής), since the form (εἶδος) of each is νοῦς¹²⁸. It is the calling of the Christian to realize in fact the likeness to God which he carries, to become God's imitator, μιμητής. Clement, according to Ladner¹²⁹, was perhaps the first Christian writer to conjoin Plato's ὁμοίωσις θεῷ with St. Paul's μιμητὴς χριστοῦ. Thereby alone he establishes himself as a fundamental contributor to the *Areopagitica*.

The imitation begins with attention and obedience to the virtues enjoined by Christ, and the subsequent acquisition of "the *habitus* [ἔξις] which comes from application [ἄσκησις], so that on account of these [the Christian] is compelled to

123. See above, esp. Chapter IV, 168-177.

124. *Excerpta*, esp. 4:1-3 and 5:3.

125. *Pédag.* VI (27:2-3).

126. *Ibid.* (41:2-42:3).

127. *Excerpta*, esp. 13:1-5.

128. *Strom.* VI.9 (PG IX 293B).

129. Ladner, "The Concept of Images in the Greek Fathers" *DOP* 7 (1953) 13-14, referring to *Thaet.* 176A and *Laws* 716B and 837A.

be likened [ἐξομοιοῦσθαι] to the Teacher”¹³⁰. The struggle, ἄσκησις, is against the rule of the passions and the goal, in imitation of Christ, is freedom from their demands, ἀπάθεια¹³¹. The “gnostic soul” is thereby called to become “an earthly image [ἐπίγειος εἰκὼν] of the divine δύναμις”, a “temple [ναὸς] of the Holy Spirit”¹³², invested with the splendor of Christ’s glory¹³³.

Turning to Paul’s theme of the Christian as ναὸς in I Cor 3:16, Clement explicitly invokes this text in order to employ the principle of the microcosm in a way not a little reminiscent of Philo.

‘Know ye not,’ says the apostle, ‘that ye are the temple of God?’ The Gnostic is consequently divine and already holy, God-bearing and God-borne. Now the Scripture... plainly pronounces sin foreign and contrary to the nature of the temple of God. Now the temple is great, as the Church, and it is small, as the man who preserves the seed of Abraham. He, therefore, who has God resting in him will not desire aught else. At once leaving all hindrances, and despising all matter which distracts him, he cleaves the heaven by knowledge. And passing through the spiritual essences, and all rule and authority, he touches the highest thrones, hastening [toward] that alone for the sake of which alone he knew [μόνος... μόνον]¹³⁴.

Here, clearly, Philo’s universe, τὸ πᾶν, has been replaced by the Church. The latter is in a sense summed up in the gnostic. Heaven and earth meet in him, and he climbs the ladder of the angels to touch the face of God while still within, presumably, the temple of his soul. The idea of climbing the heavenly ladder is not Dionysian, but the rest comes very close indeed.

Besides the temple and priestly language, itself important for our picture of Dionysius, let us recall here our discussion of θεοειδής and θεομίμησις in the *CD* where, according to Dionysius, humans in fulfilling their ἀναλογία become at once imitators of and participants in the providential love of God¹³⁵. So, too, with Dionysius’ predecessor, Clement: the process of conforming to God is not purely a matter of one’s autonomous will, a mere question of ethics, but of “tasting the will of God”, presenting one’s soul to the commandments¹³⁶, and thus through a “voluntary and perfect confession” showing forth “the activity of God, for the sanctity [ῥοσιότης] of the gnostic is, as it were, a kind of correspondence [ἀντεπιστροφὴ] to Providence”¹³⁷. The activity, ἐνέργεια, of Christian “gnostics” is

130. *Strom.* VI.9 (PG IX 293B); also *Pédag.* (100:7). Recall the significance of ἕξις in *CH* I.3 124A (9:5).

131. *Ibid.* and VII.11 (PG IX 489C).

132. *Ibid.*

133. *Ibid.* V.6 (GCS 40:1).

134. VII.13 82.2-5 (GCS 58:25-59:5).

135. See Chapter II above, 86-105.

136. *Strom.* VII.11 (PG IX 485A).

137. *Ibid.* VII.7 (457C).

“woven together with blessed Providence”¹³⁸, such that they themselves become, with God, “causes of salvation”¹³⁹.

Again like Dionysius, with the likening in action to Christ through the assimilation of (and to) his teachings, i.e., the *κάθαρσις*, comes as well progress in the “knowledge of wisdom from which right-doing is never separated”¹⁴⁰, in other words, illumination. Cooperation with the saving power of God carries with it a certain sharing in the mind of Providence. No more than in the case of virtuous actions is the *gnosis*, which Clement understands as the goal of our desires and of Providence on our behalf¹⁴¹, purely the result of our own efforts, or a purely “natural”, inherent potential. There are doubtless in Clement certain overtones of the Platonist schools, particularly his over-stress of “mind”. Nonetheless his Christian inspiration remains clear in his insistence on the revelation in Christ, on Christ himself as the “face of revealed truth”, the way to “knowledge of God”¹⁴², and on the association of this knowledge with incorruption and life everlasting¹⁴³. Illumination, *gnosis*, is then a gift (*δόσις*) of God¹⁴⁴. It is participation in him¹⁴⁵. Peter’s confession of Christ comes not “through the flesh, but through the power [*δύναμις*] of the Father”¹⁴⁶. Furthermore, the way to *gnosis* is through love which, as one writer has it¹⁴⁷, provides the “divine milieu” for all such research (*ζήτησις*) and discovery (*εὑρεσις*):¹⁴⁸ “we must be likened [*ἐξομοιοῦσθαι*] to him through love that by like we may contemplate like [*τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ θεωρῶμεν*]”¹⁴⁹. We know God by means of a power already received from him. All this, again, must recall Dionysius. Clement’s stress on prayer, too, recalls *DN* III and, especially, the image of the anchor and the rock which the Areopagite appears to have taken complete from the earlier writer¹⁵⁰. Clement’s gnostic, armed with prayer and the power of love, enabled thus to understand and to explain “the things which are said by the Spirit in hidden manner”¹⁵¹, looking through the “body” of Scripture to the mysteries awaiting “beneath the names”¹⁵², initiated into the ways of God, made indeed God’s co-worker, and accorded the vision [*ἐποπτικὴ θεωρία*]¹⁵³ of the glory round about the Godhead, surely contributed to

138. *Ibid.*

139. *Ibid.* VI.15 (GCS 122:3).

140. *Ibid.* II.10 (17:4).

141. See, for example, *Ibid.* VI.5 121:3-4.

142. *Ibid.* VI.15 (122:1).

143. *Ibid.* VI.10 (60:1-63:8).

144. *Ibid.* V.1 (12:2).

145. For the equation *μετουσία* = *γνώσις* = *θέωσις*, see *Ibid.* V.10 (60:1ff).

146. *Ibid.* VI.5 (132:4).

147. Gendle, *Apophatic*, 230.

148. *Strom.* VI.15 (121:3-4) and II.12 (53:2).

149. *Ibid.* V.1 (13:2).

150. *Ibid.* IV.23 (152:2-3), and see *DN* III.1 680CD.

151. *Ibid.* VI.15 (115:5).

152. *Ibid.* (131:3).

153. *Ibid.* V.10 (66:2) and VII.7 (PG IX 464D-465A).

the portrait of the hierarch in the *EH*, to Moses in the *MT*, and generally to the underlying ideas and vocabulary of the *CD*.

Summary: Philo and Clement may be seen as laying the groundwork fundamental not only to the Dionysian corpus, but to very much of Greek Christian theology. Neither, especially Clement, is completely systematic. Both are concerned to employ what for them are the true and legitimate insights of the Greek philosophical tradition in order to explain the revelation in (for Philo) the Old Testament and (Clement) in Christ.

In relation to our seven points, we see that numbers one and two, God at once transcendent and immanent, unknowable yet knowable by grace, are present and developed at length in both writers. Both speak of the divinity as beyond all names and knowing, the Creator absolutely unlike his creation. They both lay heavy stress on the apophaticism familiar to us from the *CD*, and both employ the imagery of Moses and the "darkness" on Sinai which Dionysius will use in the *MT*. Also central to their writings is their complementary emphasis on what Lossky terms the "antinomy" of God's immanence. God reveals himself to us through his δυνάμεις, a term they use – as will Dionysius – and which they also indicate as the divine realities adumbrated by the names ascribed to God. Like Dionysius, too, they frequently employ a vocabulary and imagery of light in connection with the "powers" and our experience of them. That we, creatures, are capable of such an experience, are somehow *capax Dei*, indicates a feature of our created existence which Philo and Clement, as Dionysius, more or less assume. Thus we find the language of participation, μετουσία, very much present in (especially) Clement, together with terms such as ὁμοίωσις, οἰκείωσις, etc. whose synonyms we encountered in the *CD*.

The Scriptural revelation, our point three, is the means stressed by both writers as uniquely given us by God for the appropriation of his presence and grace. It is the medium whereby we, through virtue and contemplation, are to encounter and ascend to him. For both it is the work of the Logos, for Clement the person of Christ. The Word of God is the "mystery" of knowledge and life underlying the words and injunctions, the images, the "veils" of Scripture – here, too, we find the beginnings of the vision given us in the *CD* and the stress on anagogy. The Logos also, our point four, is the reality who sustains and directs the creation he has caused to be. The creation testifies to him and, as in Philo and (more so) Clement, works together with him in the economy of salvation. Our points five and six, Church and altar, cannot be said to be prominent in Clement, although they are not altogether absent. In the figure of the Christian Gnostic he has outlined much of our point seven. The illumined and perfected Christian is at once the "temple of God", the "earthly image" of the divine powers, and in turn illuminator and perfecter of others. Here is the clear adumbration of the Dionysian hierarch. The real development, however, of points three and four especially, i.e., the presentation of the divine pedagogy of the Logos and our appropriation of it as part of a coherent and systematic vision, awaits us in the next of our subjects.

B. ORIGEN

Origen's theology represents the first attempt to reconcile within a single, coherent system the revelation of God in Christ with contemporary philosophy. The prevailing philosophy of his day was that of the Middle Platonic school whose tenets Origen is said to have learned from Ammonius Sakkas, the instructor of Plotinus¹⁵⁴. The systems of Origen and Plotinus do bear certain resemblances to one another which we, with an eye on the relation that both bear to the later *CD*, shall have occasion to note. As it is with Dionysius that our basic interest lies, we shall make no attempt here to do full justice to the fluidity of Origen's thought, nor to trace in detail its sources and parallels. At the risk of caricature, we intend rather to note certain salient features of his system in accordance with the seven points given above, paying particular attention to his understanding of the Fall and the subsequent ordering of creation, the role of Christ, and the Christian's appropriation of the salvation offered him – roughly, points three through six. First, however, by way of all-important background, we must briefly examine his teaching in relation to God's knowability and participability, our points one and two, which mark in general a departure from both tradition and the *CD*.

1. God and the first creation

a) The Father – a want of apophasis

There are certain passages in Origen that might indicate his adherence to the doctrine of the intrinsically transcendent and unknowable God we found in Philo and Clement. For example, the following:

If one were to consider that the wealth of ideas and of knowledge concerning God [τῶν περὶ Θεοῦ θεωρημάτων καὶ γνώσεως] cannot be comprehended by human nature [ἄληπτον τυγχάνει ἀνθρωπίνη φύσει], nor by any other beings, besides Christ and the Holy Spirit, which have come to be, one would understand how God is surrounded by darkness [περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶ σκότος]... [there is] no description rich enough to describe him¹⁵⁵.

The impression of apophaticism here (we shall return often to this text) would be mistaken¹⁵⁶. Origen parts company with the writers noted so far and even from his pagan contemporary, Plotinus. The latter's supreme "One", outside and beyond every category, is in many respects more akin to the unknowable God of Philo, Clement, and Dionysius than to Origen's "Father". The Father is

154. See Eusebius, *Histoire Ecclésiastique* VI.xix.6-11 (ed. G. Bardy SC 41).

155. *Comm. in Jn.* 2:28 (SC text, numbers 120 and 156, ed. Blanc).

156. As, for example, paralleled in Albinus, *Epitome*, X.4: ἄρρητος δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ νῦν μόνῳ ληπτός.

“spirit”, yes, but for Origen this expression signifies primarily that he is without a body, immaterial, non-physical¹⁵⁷. God is, in other words, *vontōs* as opposed to *αἰσθητός*, for it is with the distinction sensible/intelligible that Origen draws his line of fundamental demarcation rather than between Creator and creature. Thus, in spite of the fact that he insists, in all sincerity, on the Father as the “font whence originates all intellectual existence or mind”, as the Creator of minds, it remains the case that the Father himself is understood as a mind, *the* Mind certainly, but still Mind among other minds: “a simple intellectual existence... unity... oneness throughout”¹⁵⁸. There is no absolute chasm in Origen between God and his creatures, rather, we are obliged to note a certain likeness or kinship in essence which goes quite beyond any notion of *ὁμοίωσις* or the like. Positive ascriptions, “unity”, “oneness”, etc., predominate, even to the extent of reckoning the Father “finite”¹⁵⁹ and so further reducing the distance between him and creation – or, better, making it in fact possible for us to speak of, precisely, a “distance”, which, however great it may be, is at least in theory measurable, rather than of an absolute “otherness”.

What then of the “darkness [*σκότος*]” about God mentioned above? The reply is that, unlike the *γνόφος* of the other writers, Origen’s is conditional rather than absolute. The nature of those conditions awaits our discussion of the Fall and Origen’s understanding of “human nature”, and – following – God as participable.

b) The Logos, the *logoi*, and the *logikoi*

The Christian theology of Origen’s day had not yet established the distinction between creation and generation that was to prove so crucial to the triadological debates of the following century¹⁶⁰. Origen, as we saw above, numbers the Son and Spirit among “the beings which have come to be”, the *γενητά*. They are decidedly subordinate to the Father, and to each other: the Son to the Father as the Spirit to the Son¹⁶¹. We hear even that the Son is the creature of the Father’s will¹⁶², an expression which, however, he uses primarily in order to stress the primacy of the Father’s personal will in generation instead of leaving the Second Person to be understood as the result of an automatic process¹⁶³.

157. *First Principles* I.1.2 (Koetschau, 18:3ff).

158. *Ibid.* I.1.6 (21:10ff). Note the terms *μονάς* and *ένάς*, and, it is true, the statement that we cannot contemplate God *sicut est*.

159. Or, at least, his power: *πεπερασμένην γὰρ εἶναι καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ Θεοῦ λεκτέον... ἐὰν γὰρ ἄπειρος ἡ θεία δύναμις, ἀνάγκη αὐτὴν μηδὲ ἑαυτὴν νοεῖν*; *Ibid.* II.9.1 (164:3-6).

160. See, for example, Prestige, *God and Patristic Thought* (1952) 131-156.

161. *First Principles* I.3.5 (55:4-56:8).

162. *Ibid.* I.2.6 (35:5ff).

163. Thus, *Ibid.*, Origen argues against the “fables” purporting to break God’s substance into fragments (*in partes*).

κόσμος νοητός, only the *logikoi* share truly in the Logos just as, for that matter, the Logos is God by sharing in God¹⁷⁴. We mention the latter in as much as it points to a third aspect of the *logoi* which, once again, both recalls Dionysius and distinguishes him from Origen. The *logoi* in us mark a certain relationship with the divine. They are his presence in us and the possibility of our communion in him. The potential ambiguity of this scheme, alleviated or largely neutralized – we believe¹⁷⁵ – in the *CD* through Dionysius' insistence on God's transcendence and his placing of the *logoi* in the δυνάμεις, becomes sharply evidence in Origen. Very much as with Plotinus' use of λόγος¹⁷⁶, or for that matter Proclus' of ἀναλογία¹⁷⁷, the *logoi* in Origen indicate a certain character of unbroken continuity linking the (rational) creation with the Logos, and so with the Father. We are confronted with a sequence of "relations" or "proportions:"

The logos which is in each of the reasonable beings has with the Logos who abides in the beginning with God the same relation [λόγος] as the Logos of God has with God. Because, just as he who is God in himself and true God [αὐτόθεος καὶ ἀληθινὸς Θεός] is with respect to his image [the Logos]... the Logos-in-himself [ὁ αὐτόλογος] is with respect to the logos which is in each creature¹⁷⁸.

The Father alone is αὐτόθεος, the Son alone αὐτόλογος and God by participation, and the rational creation thus *logikoi* or *logoi* by virtue of their participation in the Son: as the Son is to the Father, so are we to the Son. Furthermore, the arrangement is permanent, eternal. When Origen writes that "in the beginning... God created a large number of intelligent beings"¹⁷⁹, he neither means by "beginning" an origin in time nor by creation the world we know now. There was no time when the Father was not Creator, or the Logos not the "place" of creation¹⁸⁰. The "originally" created world, the only true one, the eternal one, was/is a world of "minds", νόες. This primordial universe of minds and Mind is the background against which Origen's presentation of Providence and Incarnation is to be read. It is the reality that we, reason-endowed beings, were "in the beginning" and to which we are called to return again at the "end".

Summary: The apparently familiar character of our opening quotation seems now to have been illusory. Origen, borrowing at once from the philosophers' schools and the Gnostic preaching of an original unity in God, has elaborated a vision that marks a quite unprecedented departure from the Scriptural, Alexandrian,

174. *In Jn.* 2:2.

175. See Chapter II above, 86-88.

176. See Armstrong, *Plotinus*, 35.

177. *Elements*, prop. 195, 171.

178. *In Jn.* 2:3; see also *First Principles* I.2.13 (47:3-9).

179. *First Principles* II.9.1 (164:1).

180. *Ibid.* I.2.10 (42:11-43:4).

and later Dionysian lines of thought we have so far discussed. We may summarize this departure in the following four points: 1) and central is the distinct lack of any absolute gap between God and creation, thus the elaboration of a vision capable, certainly, of offering us a difference in degree, but unable to assert any such thing in kind. God and his creation are akin, thus; 2) the development of the Logos as, in effect, God's hypostatized immanence, brought into being by the Father's will, to be sure, but also the eternal expression of that will and eternal mediator between the Father's original monad, and 3) the equally eternal, original creation of the νόεσ. Consequently, 4) there is a continuity of relationship between God and his first creation which requires – necessarily in our view – a certain continuity of nature or essence. God, the Logos, and the *logikoi* occupy the same world.

So far much of his vision of a first creation sets Origen quite apart from Dionysius – although, perhaps, there may be something in common regarding the ambiguity with respect to creation and time, and certainly the notion of the λόγοι is common to both. In the section following, corresponding roughly to our points three through six, we hope to show points of importance in parallel with the *CD*.

2. Providence and the second creation: exodus and return

In our original quotation Origen spoke of the impossibility of knowing God for “human nature” and “other beings... which have come to be”. The apparent contradiction between this statement and the scheme we have just outlined is resolved as soon as we accept that he was writing not of the essentially uniform world of νόεσ, but of the differentiated universe of the second creation.

a) Πρόοδος and ἐπιστροφή: genesis as judgment and mercy

The second creation embraces our present world, mingledly intelligible and sensible. It is the product both of the Fall and of Providence. Here we arrive at the heart of Origen's response to the challenges afforded him by Platonists and Gnostics. The former, attaining the peak of their power and coherence in the thought of Origen's contemporary, Plotinus, saw this material world as the necessary and therefore eternal expression at furthest remove of the potentialities inherent in the One¹⁸¹. The world exists, not as the product of One's will, but as deriving inevitably from it¹⁸². Further, the world is therefore holy and good, and bearer of a knowledge, γνῶσις, of its source. In and through contemplation of the world we may ascend, or return, to its cause¹⁸³. This is, of course, the outline of the πρόοδος - ἐπιστροφή cycle that the later Neoplatonists would elaborate. The

181. See Armstrong, *Architecture*, 61-64.

182. Although, *Ibid.*, there are certain tensions in Plotinus' scheme; see Chapter II above, 79-80.

183. *Ibid.* 98-107.

Gnostics¹⁸⁴, on the other hand, saw an absolute gulf between the high God and the creation of the world. The latter, both the creation itself and its creator, were evil, wholly fallen and alien to the spiritual world and the true God. Christ, in their system, appears in the lower world in order to lead the elect up and out of the realm of the evil Demiurge. Salvation means escape from the world and the flesh.

From his development of a first creation embracing the intelligible alone, we can see that Origen has already incorporated certain elements of the Gnostic scheme. He is, though, just as concerned as Plotinus to defend the value of the physical world against the Gnostics¹⁸⁵, particularly in that he rightly understands this defense as integral to another aspect of the catholic tradition denied by them: the unity of the revelation in Christ as promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. Finally, there is his refusal to countenance any of the predeterminism characteristic of the Gnostic schemes and to insist, together with the philosophers¹⁸⁶, at once on the complete freedom of humans and on the perfect justice and goodness of God. The result is a remarkable adaptation of what would come to be called the *πρόοδος* - *ἐπιστροφή* cycle that includes elements of the philosophers, Gnostics, and – not least – the catholic tradition that it was ever Origen's intention to uphold and defend¹⁸⁷.

Put roughly, Origen associates the *πρόοδος* with the Fall and the *ἐπιστροφή* with God's Providence that transforms the former into the means for our return back and up to our status "in the beginning". The original unity of the *νόεσ* was broken when, at a certain "time" they grew "negligent" and fell away from contemplation into ignorance¹⁸⁸. They lost the lineaments of their proper nature and became (after a metaphor Origen admits as fanciful) cold, "gross" and heavy with the weight of their forgetfulness¹⁸⁹. The "procession" is not then due to the will of God, but to the freedom of his creatures. It is their freely chosen movement away from him and from the stillness of contemplation¹⁹⁰. This motion

184. See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 43-44, 250-253 and 260-265.

185. See *First Principles* II.1.1-1 (106-133), and the discussion in H. Koch, *Pronoia and Paideusis* (1932) 13-15 and 78-87, and Jonas, "Origenes *Περί Ἀρχῶν*: ein System patristischer Gnosis" *TZ* 4 (1948) 101-119, and Daniélou, *Origen*, trans. Mitchell (1955) 191-198.

186. Koch, *Pronoia*, esp. 281-290.

187. It is, perhaps, just the inconsistencies of Origen – for example the place of the Holy Spirit in a system where he clearly does not enjoy a secure position – which argue most strongly for his loyalty to the Church's tradition.

188. *First Principles* I.4.1-2 (63:10-65:7). Why they fell is not clear. Origen does stress free will, but he is also accused of teaching their "satiety" with God (see I.3.8 62:20-63:1). There is, however, some debate concerning the nature of the *κόπος*; see M. Harl, "Recherches sur l'Origénisme" *TU* 93 (1966) 373-405.

189. *Ibid.* II.8.3 (160:1-8). The soul becomes such by freezing (*ψύχεσθαι*). "Soul" is then not a substance, but a condition, and the soul saved is no longer soul (*Ibid.* 155:13ff). See also Jonas, "*Περί Ἀρχῶν*", 114-115, for comparison with Dionysius.

190. Recall above, 273-274, that even the Logos is neither *αὐτόθεος* nor *αὐτοαγαθός*, but holds the ascriptions *θεός* and *ἀγαθός* because he abides in the contemplation of the Father.

in turn gives rise to genesis, the second creation¹⁹¹. Unlike the Neoplatonists this is not an automatic affair. It is providential, and in the ascription of the world's making to God's will we may note a fundamental break with Platonist thought and an adherence to the personal Creator of Biblical tradition. God wills the present world and enacts it through the Logos in order to accomplish a double purpose: the fulfillment, first, of his justice as Judge and, secondly, of his goodness as Savior and Redeemer.

b) Functional levels of being and anagogy

Let us expand briefly on these purposes. God's justice requires that the fallen minds be housed in forms appropriate to the unequal extent of their slide into ignorance¹⁹². His establishment of an "impartial law of retribution"¹⁹³, a kind of karma¹⁹⁴, results in the diversity of rational beings ranging from angels to demons that we know as our world. The evident differences in ranks and gifts do not, as Origen evidently thought they might, impugn divine justice because every difference, every hierarchy, is not due to any intrinsic difference or "inequality" in the created nature of rational beings, but to different, temporarily assigned functions: "...the names are not names of the natures of living things, but of functions [τάξεις] with which such or such a spiritual nature has been invested by God"¹⁹⁵. We take particular note of this use of τάξεις as being in direct contrast to the use to which Dionysius will put it. Unlike Dionysius, for whom the τάξεις are the expression of the λόγοι that God's eternal Providence has for each creature¹⁹⁶, Origen understands the term as referring exclusively to the action taken by God and effected through the Logos after the first creation and Fall. They are not therefore the direct reflection of the *logoi* that the Son holds in himself.

But, they do reveal those *logoi*. Here we arrive at the second purpose of the providential creation: it is established, rather given us, by Providence as the means for our instruction and eventual restoration. Here we do encounter a point of contact, and a fundamental one, with the later system of the Areopagite. If, as opposed to Dionysius, angels and humans are for Origen of one fundamental nature, and if the instruction given is intended to lead them back and up to their originally uniform status, it nonetheless remains the case that for both writers the action and reflection of Providence in the world is anagogic;¹⁹⁷ everything that it establishes is given to lead the soul back and up to γνῶσις. Thus, citing Origen at length:

191. We are thinking here of the triad στάσις - κίνησις - γένεσις, which Maximus Confessor uses in his critique of Origenism; see Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 92ff.

192. *First Principles* I.8.1 (GCS 95:14-97:4) and 8.4 (102:12-104:14).

193. *Ibid.* II.9.3-8 (166:12-172:24) esp. 9.8 (171:32-172:24).

194. The phrase is Jonas', "*Περί Ἀρχῶν*", 106-107.

195. *In Jn.* II:23.

196. See Chapter III above, 121-124

197. See above Chapter I, 67; II, 89, note 89; and III, 125-130 and 133-134.

Since... it is impossible for a man living in the flesh to know anything of matters hidden and invisible unless he has apprehended some image and likeness thereto from among things visible, I think that he who made all things in wisdom so created all the species of visible things upon earth that he placed in them some teaching and knowledge of things invisible and heavenly, whereby the human mind might mount to spiritual understanding and seek the grounds of things in heaven¹⁹⁸.

The passage recalls the *CD* save that, while for Dionysius the reference would be primarily to the *EH*, Origen is speaking here of the whole material world. Also different, although it is in the background, is Origen's approach to the divine pedagogy. He appears to see the anagogy as more a conscious and deliberate act of human will than as the increasing participation in the divine power that, itself, leads us up. Put another way, the "images" of the physical world are more in the nature of "clues" for Origen. They do not appear to have the same sacramental power as Dionysius' icons. This would seem to accord with the differences in their systems that we have already noted. Relatedly, the nature of humanity "in the flesh" would also explain the apparent apophaticism of our original citation. Human nature and the "natures" of other beings, as presently constituted, cannot enjoy the direct knowledge of God. The *σκότος* is an obscurity, owing to the Fall and the flesh, that the anagogy is intended ultimately to illuminate.

c) The Providence of Scripture: ἀρχή and allegory

The same approach is adopted far more intensely with respect to the Revelation recorded in Scripture. Here the diligent and enlightened student of Providence discovers, beneath the cloak of material and temporal things, the face of the Logos himself. The Scriptures bear within themselves the *μυστήριον* of God and the beginnings. They are "the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things"¹⁹⁹. Origen does not disdain the importance of the literal account. It has its value, just as we saw in Clement, as the record of God's pedagogy in its gradual stages, the history of the divine condescension to our needs – even to "making baby-talk for babies"²⁰⁰. The mysteries, the eternal doctrines of God and world, are what lie at the heart of the sacred texts, and are what they reveal. The texts at their deepest levels cease to be history at all. Since the Logos himself is present in their words²⁰¹, history must finally dissolve under the gaze of the truly enlightened in order to reveal the eternal realities of the "beginning". Again, it is the anagogy of Providence that informs Origen's allegorizing exegesis²⁰², his insistence that the student of the Bible rise to the

198. *Comm. in Cant.* III. The translation is R. P. Lawson's *ACW* XXVI (1957) 235.

199. *First Principles* Preface, 8 (14:8-9).

200. See *Homélie sur Jérémie* XVIII.2, ed. Nautin, *SC* 232 and 238, Vol II., 202-204.

201. See Harl, *Verbe Incarné*, 372, and Hanson *Allegory and Event* (1955) 188 and 193.

202. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 188: "...he [Origen] is determined to believe that every verse, sometimes every word, is an oracle in itself".

recognition that “all Scripture is the one perfect and attuned instrument, producing from its various notes a single sound of salvation”²⁰³, and, recognizing this, take it to himself in order to begin the ascent back to his original and true being.

The ascent is back to the origins: τέλος equals ἀρχή. For Origen therefore – and here he is quite unlike the CD – divine Providence is finally “self-destructive”. It is temporal and therefore temporary, just as, on the other hand, the natures of God, Logos, and *logikoi* are ultimately the same and unchanging beneath the forms and attitudes that they have adopted by reason of the Fall and the divine economy. Between two stillnesses, two eternities of contemplation, Providence is a flicker of motion, a kind of divine shadow-comedy.

d) Christ, image of truth

Such a view of the present world must have drastic effects on Origen’s view of the Incarnation. For all his unquestionable devotion to the person of Christ, his understanding of Jesus’ role must be that it is fundamentally “iconic”. The same timeless resolution that applies to Scripture, sacred history, and the whole present world must perforce apply also to the Incarnation. Jesus becomes the “way”, but he is not the τέλος. This is brought home, first, by a certain ambiguity surrounding the union of God with humanity. Although there are texts²⁰⁴ suggesting a “Cyrillian” interpretation of the unity of subject in the Incarnate Word, there are others²⁰⁵ that argue for two subjects, one being the Logos and the other the single νοῦς which, alone of all the νόες, did not fall but remained united to the Word. On the level therefore of the secondary, providential creation, Jesus remains the subject, teacher, and enabling means of Christian life, piety, and contemplation. At the last, though, his is a didactic function designed to bring the *logikoi*, both humans and angels²⁰⁶, back and up to the union in the Logos that they originally shared with him:

...whoever makes for the height of perfection and blessedness is in progress towards the image and likeness of that soul [Jesus] which, primarily and before all others, is in the image of the Son of God²⁰⁷.

Jesus is thus a “parable”, a “type” to be interpreted. Beneath the surface of

203. *Comm. in Mat.* taken from the *Philokalia* of Origen, ed. J. M. Robinson (1893) VI, 50. The translation is from J. C. Whitton’s *Selections from the Commentaries and Homilies of Origen* (1929) 49.

204. For example, *First Principles* I.2.8 (38:13-39:11); *In Jer.* I.7, 211; and again *First Princ.* II.6.3 (143:5-17).

205. For example, *In Jn.* I.28, 58, which anticipates the Nestorian language of the “assumed man;” *In Jer.* XV.6, 127; *Con. Cels.* IV.5 and 18, ed. Borret, *SC* 136 (1968) 200 and 224-226. See also the article by R. Williams, “Origen on the Soul of Jesus” *Origeniana Tertia* (Rome: 1985) 131-137.

206. See *First Principles* III.6 (279:23ff) on the cosmic university.

207. *In Jn.* I.28, 156.

the Incarnate Word, just as with the Scripture and the sensible world, lie the intelligible realities. As M. Harl remarks, “the Word made flesh is revealer in so far as he ceases, for us, to be flesh”²⁰⁸. The Incarnation is simply another stage, even if an all-important one, in the program of God’s pedagogy, another, even if most central, of God’s accommodations to our presently dimmed noetic faculties. It is, quoting Harl once more, “incarnate doctrine”, and Christ, for both humans and angels, is “a founder of religion, a master of doctrine”²⁰⁹. With respect, then, to our points three and four, Origen’s Christ is less the personal power of God’s life and newness breaking into a creation grown old and divided in sin in order to unite heaven (angels) and earth (humans and the sensible) in the single new “city” that is his body, than he is the universal teacher and leader. He is not himself the meaning of Revelation, rather he is the revelation of its meaning through example, teaching, and continuing assistance. This provisional character of the Incarnation once again distances Origen from both his predecessors and successors.

e) The appropriation of Providence

i) *The mystery of the Church*

Turning to our points five and six, the Church and the sacraments – especially the Eucharist – it is clear that their place in Origen’s system must also be drastically affected by the myth of an original creation. Thus, while never underestimating either the genuine character of his devotion or – truly – the complexity of his thought²¹⁰, we are confronted with texts of an ambiguity similar to the one that appeared to suggest an apophatic element. For example, the following:

...you must not think that she is called the Bride or the Church only from the time when the Savior came in the flesh; she is so called from the beginning of the human race and from the very foundation of the world – indeed... even before the foundation of the world²¹¹.

While Origen is as perfectly sincere here as in everything he writes, the casual reader might easily misread these lines in the light of such Scriptural precedents as, for example, “the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world”²¹² or St. Paul’s mystery hidden in the counsels of God. The crucial

208. Harl, *Verbe Incarné*, 204; see also 307.

209. *Ibid.*, 114.

210. See studies such as those of de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit* (1950), and Crouzel, *Théologie de l’image chez Origène* (1961), for emphasis upon Origen the man of the Church and on his sacramental vision. For Origen the mystic, see again Crouzel, *Connaissance Mystique* (1961) esp. 527-535. The same scholar’s *Origène et la Philosophie* (1962) witnesses to the delicacy of Origen’s thought and to the dangers awaiting its over-systematization, 214-215. We stand warned.

211. *Comm. in Cant.* II.8 (GCS 157:13-16); Lawson, 149.

212. Rev 13:8.

difference is that Origen is not referring to the eternal existence of the Church in God's counsels or plans (the Scriptural terms), or in the divinity's *πρόνοια* or *δυνάμεις* (Dionysius' equivalents), but to the Church's actual pre-existence in the primordial unity of the *νόες* gathered in the Logos. The "Church which is being built by God"²¹³ here below, in the present age, is thus not so much any "new, theandric" reality as it is yet another stag in the pedagogy of the Logos that aids our ascent, our *ἀναγωγή*, "from the incarnate life to that which was in the beginning with God"²¹⁴. As with the visible world, the Bible, Christ himself, so is the Church, its structures and institutions, a teaching device given in order that the soul may find its way back to its original and true home. Origen does not deny the sacraments, either. They remain²¹⁵, but are inevitably no more nor less "sacraments" than the texts of Scripture, deprived of most of their power through having at once to point backwards to the "beginning" as well as carrying the promise and presence of the "end". The literal primacy of the intelligible must dissolve even the Eucharist into a species of moral encouragement: "...for what else can the body and blood of God the Word be save the word that sustains and the word that makes glad the heart"²¹⁶?

ii) *Hierarchy*

With respect to Dionysius and touching on our points six and seven, we may briefly note two other aspects of Origen's thought. First, regarding the Church, we find a certain diminishment of the outward form of the community centered about its bishop in favor of "the hierarchy of the faithful in their various degrees of holiness grouped round the spiritual master"²¹⁷. There is a distinction drawn between the simple faithful and "the perfect who possess the gathered number of words and deeds and blessedness which constitute blessedness"²¹⁸. The former learn "the elementary lessons in the outward Christianity", by which expression Origen intends the moral life and, we may suppose, the literal beliefs of the community, while the latter progress to "the Christianity which is in secret alone" being taught it by those "men who are found well-qualified through the Spirit"²¹⁹. The evident hierarchy of the Church headed by the episcopacy is therefore not at all necessarily identical to its true hierarchy of knowledge and holiness. The latter is headed by a *didaskalos*, an instructor and initiator into the true philosophy, who recalls the "gnostic" of Clement. He also resembles Dionysius' hierarch, save that the Areopagite, contrary to Origen – and Clement – insists upon the identity of

213. *In Matt.* XII.10-11 (86:4-89:34).

214. *In Jn.* I:18.

215. Daniélou, *Origen*, 28ff and 56ff.

216. *In Matt.* (GCS Vol. II, 197:4-6); translation from Tollington, 32.

217. Daniélou, *Origen*, 48.

218. *In Matt.* XII.10 (GCS I, 86:7-11); trans. Tollington's, 131.

219. *In Jn.* I:7-8.

the “outward” and “inward” hierarchies – an insistence that, as we have noted²²⁰, leads to its own difficulties.

iii) Personal appropriation of Providence

Our second point, or group of points, bears upon Origen’s view of the Christian’s personal appropriation of salvation through Christ. The Christian is to meet the pedagogy of the Old Testament preparation and the New Testament revelation with a corresponding effort to recapitulate in himself the providential action of God on his behalf. To quote Hanson, “Origen is no less insistent than Kierkegaard that the only history which concerns the Christian is history *for you*”²²¹. Sacred history, as is most clearly developed in his homilies on the exodus of Israel²²², is the history of the individual soul. Israel’s deliverance, wanderings, and eventual entry into Canaan were of course to become classical images in the Christian tradition of the Christian life. Our point, however, is that for Origen this, as well as his other spiritual interpretations of Scripture, was the true meaning²²³. Let us put the matter another way. Scripture is both the image of humanity and humanity’s world, and the key given by God to reveal the world’s meaning. Just as with the *EH*, we believe that Origen understands the Bible as a complex of iconography, as a series of images: of God, of the intelligible world, of our present world and Providence, of the Incarnation, of the human being and the latter’s union with God. The sequence, too, of the appropriation of those icons takes the pattern that Dionysius will follow: purification, illumination, perfection and union. Purging himself of his passions as Israel was cleansed in the desert, the Christian acquires the virtues of Christ²²⁴. Thus equipped, he is enabled to love and so to know truly, i.e., to love and to know “nothing earthly, nothing material”²²⁵. Contemplating Scripture, and through it the world, the soul comes to know itself, “what she is like essentially”²²⁶. This means a knowledge embracing its own νοῦς²²⁷, the soul’s intelligible reality, its *logos*. To do this is to share in seeing creation through the eye of the Creator, since the “*logos* of each of those is the good that is beheld by God”²²⁸. Here is, indeed, the greatest of spiritual gifts, the γνῶσις whose “supreme function... is... to know the Holy Trinity, and in the second place, to know God’s creation”²²⁹. Having accomplished the κάθαρσις

220. See Chapters III above, 134, and IV, 213-214.

221. Hanson, *Allegory*, 277. Emphasis in original.

222. See Daniélou, *Origen*, 297ff.

223. See Crouzel, “Origène, précurseur du monachisme” *TVM* (1961) 35-37.

224. Crouzel, *L’Image*, 232. See also, for an ecclesial emphasis, i.e., the soul and the Church, F. Ledegang, “Image and Church in Origen” *Origeniana Tertia* (Rome: 1985) 185-189.

225. *Comm. in Cant.* II.5 (GCS 145); and Lawson’s translation, 133.

226. *Ibid.* (143:4); Lawson, 130.

227. *In Jn.* II.15 (SC, 276).

228. “Ὁ λόγος περὶ ἐκάστου τούτων ἐστὶν ὁρασθεὶς Θεῷ τὸ καλόν”. *In Jn.* XVII.14, text ed. Brooke (1896) 294.

229. *Comm. in Cant.* II.5 (146:12ff); Lawson, 134.

taught and exemplified in Scripture, the soul engages in the contemplation, θεωρία, of the sacred texts and is led to the light illuminating all intelligences²³⁰, the Word who is the truth embracing the whole science (λόγος) of the intelligible world²³¹, and who brings us in himself to the Father.

iv) Appropriation over Aeons

The last stage, though, cannot be accomplished so long as the present world endures. The soul cannot, as long as it remains “in the house of this body... receive the naked and plain wisdom of God”²³². Rather, as in the *CD*, it “beholds the invisible and corporeal by means of certain analogies and images and tokens of divine things”²³³. Unlike Dionysius, however, the progress and end of the ascent will not see an irradiation of the sensible by the powers of God, a “visible theophany” truly incorporating the sensible²³⁴, but instead the complete dissolution of the αἰσθητά, disincarnation. If we are to believe the *Peri Archon*²³⁵, there will be a series of worlds, an ἀναγωγή extended through aeons, whereby the souls will continue to rise through instruction until, at last, the fabric of the second creation will dissolve entirely in order to reveal the abiding reality of the “beginning”.

Summary: Origen’s doctrine of the pre-cosmic Fall, or double creation, colors his thought throughout. It also provides the key to points of essential contact with, as well as divergence from, Dionysius. Contact in that, because of it, Origen is able to construct his scheme of an entirely providential creation. The hierarchies of being serve at once to vindicate God’s justice and to reveal his goodness through providing the *logikoi* with the images of those same divine virtues, and of their own true nature (λόγος), through and under the “signs” and “tokens” of the visible. God thus grants the *logikoi* the means of ascent (ἀναγωγή) back and up to himself. Origen’s hierarchies, his world, serve the same function as those of the *CD*. They both bear and proclaim the μυστήρια of God. They both carry γνῶσις and, in a sense, are the γνῶσις they bear. To contemplate their sacred icono-graphy and to enter into its meaning is to participate in the providential wisdom of God that informs it. The roles of Christ and the Church are, again, very similar. Christ is for Origen the universal Lord and teacher, instructor of humans and angels, exemplar, as well as the sign and presence of the end. His Church, with its gnostic *didaskaloi* reminiscent of both Clement and Dionysius, is the reality of that presence which was also before the ages.

230. *In Jn.* 1:25-26.

231. *Ibid.* 1:27.

232. *Comm. in Cant.* III.13 (220:8-12); Lawson, 235.

233. *Ibid.* See also the article by Crouzel, “Origène et la connaissance mystique” *TU* 80 (1962) 270-276, for a summary of Origen’s vocabulary of “signs” and “imagery”. For a more extended treatment, see his book of the same title, cited above, 216-235.

234. See *DN* I.4 592BC.

235. *First Principles* I.6.2 (79:19-82:19).

The last phrase directs us to the *CD*'s fundamental divergences from the Alexandrian's system. For the latter, providential must always mean provisional. The ever-presence of the beginnings beneath the present order is the true μυστήριον, the τέλος identical with the ἀρχή. Dionysius, on the other hand, with his adherence to a transcendent God and his failure to acknowledge any pre-cosmic community of minds, cannot make any such identification. While a certain ambiguity does attach itself to his presentation of creation²³⁶ – as it does to Origen's and, indeed, even to Plotinus' descent of Noûs from the One – he still cannot simply identify beginning with end. Motion (κίνησις) is therefore legitimate, and even – as we have written above – without end for the creature²³⁷. The τάξεις of being are, furthermore, permanent. The sensible is therefore to be transfigured rather than dissolved, and this in turn points to the centrality of the Incarnation. Christ is the μυστήριον, the presence of God in the sensible, in created being, and the eternal bond between heaven and earth. He is thus the reality underlying the icon as means to γνῶσις in the present age, and he is also the presence within the present of the age to come. The Church, and so its sacraments, therefore, cannot be merely a stage. They are instead the eschatological reality, present now in veiled fashion.

One might, perhaps, speak of Dionysius using the scheme of Ammonius Sakkas' other pupil, Plotinus²³⁸ (via his successors), as the correction for Origen's myth-making. Plotinus, too, stresses transcendence and the permanence of the sensible. There is doubtless something to be said for this suggestion, but, other than the fact that Plotinus shares at least as much with Origen as with Dionysius, we have not yet finished our examination of Dionysius' roots in the Christian tradition. In the fourth century we shall find, particularly among the Cappadocians, that the dialogue with – and correction of – both Origen and Neoplatonism was already making considerable progress toward important elements in the Dionysian synthesis.

236. See our discussion in Chapter II above, 78-84 and 86-87.

237. One of Origen's "inconsistencies" – see our note 187 above – may be a certain anticipation of Gregory of Nyssa's ἐπέκτασις; see *Hom. in Num.* 17.5, and with it an indication that the original unity of the *logikoi* could be spelt out in dynamic terms.

238. This, perhaps, is the basis for Elorduy's extended attempt (*Ammonio Sakkas* [Burgos: 1959]) to identify the Areopagite with the professor of both Origen and Plotinus.

CHAPTER VII

CAPPADOCIA

THE FOURTH CENTURY

The fourth century generated the great triadological disputes and devoted practically the entirety of its length to the controversy surrounding them. It saw and fostered both the ambiguous conversion of the Empire and the latter's obverse (as it were), the rise of monasticism. Each of these events had its influence upon Dionysius, and each must be included in our account of the *CD*'s sources. The great names associated with the debates over the Trinity articulated an approach to the usage of pagan learning in relation to Christian Revelation that we believe is reflected in the *DN*. Similarly, both monasticism and the great conversion that saw a recently pagan population flocking into the immense basilicas, newly constructed to receive them, were of profound importance for Dionysius' understanding of the salvation in Christ as revealed and realized in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. In light of this, we have chosen to discuss the vital Cappadocian contribution to triadology, forged during their debates particularly with Eunomius, as touching on our points relating to God's transcendence and immanence. We shall also devote some space to Gregory of Nyssa, whose system bears certain striking parallels with the *Areopagitica*. Secondly, we move to Evagrius as the great theoretician of monasticism. We shall touch very briefly on the mystagogies of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Finally, we shall move to our consideration of Dionysius' Syrian inheritance. The latter sections, on the monks, the mystagogues, and the Syrians, will be seen to bear primarily on our points three through seven.

We begin this section with the Cappadocians and a brief account of their main adversary, and target, Eunomius.

A. THE CAPPADOCIANS

1. Eunomius

In certain respects the Cappadocians' debate with Eunomius may be viewed as a conflict between schools of approach toward Origen's thought. Certainly, in

what we have left of Eunomius' thought¹, we can recognize both Origen's subordinationism and something (without the genius) of the Alexandrian's oracular attitude toward Scriptural texts². Where in Origen there had been a certain tentativeness of approach, evident in the many resonances he sought in the words of Scripture and in his great care with regard to the Church's tradition (even to inconsistency), matters became a great deal more certain and sharply defined in the schools of later Arian thought. Allegorism and metaphor were banished, and the "science" of textual interpretation introduced in their stead. The result, while perhaps not completely the "technology" of which Harnack complained³, was a decided growth in the influence of contemporary philosophical thought. The latter's categories⁴ increasingly determined both the modes and the result of exegesis. Thus, on the one hand, Origen's subordinationism became rigidly fixed. The Logos was expressly designated a creature (κτισθεὶς) and minister (ὑπουργός) by essence to "creation and the Father's purpose"⁵, while the Spirit was declared either a "product" of the Son, as in Eunomius⁶, or else evaporated into a kind of "mythological" limbo⁷. On the other hand, we find Eunomius advocating, in Meredith's words⁸, "a too-consistent application of the principles of Neo-Aristotelian logic to the structure of the universe", issuing "in a quite untenable reification of actions and qualities". Eunomius was, again after Meredith⁹, a "mystic of words", an apparently extreme realist who understood the "names" given us by God, ἀγέννητος for the Father and γέννημα or ποίημα for the Logos, as leading directly to the apprehension of their essence: "the designation truly represents the essence, the substance is the very same as that which is signified by the name"¹⁰. It is perhaps of interest that none of the "names" cited, for all their champion's fervor on their behalf, are to be found anywhere in Scripture.

While then Eunomius may have genuinely felt his theology to be in accordance

1. I am indebted here to the critical texts, *Eunomii Liber Apologeticus* and *Eunomii Liber Expositio Fidei*, together with the exposition of Eunomius' thought, supplied by Richard Vaggione in the latter's *Aspects of Faith in the Eunomian Controversy*, MS D.Phil. (Oxford: 1976). See also Anthony Meredith, *Studies in the Contra Eunomium of Gregory of Nyssa*, MS D.Phil. (Oxford: 1972).

2. Vaggione, 220ff.

3. Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. IV, trans. Speirs and Millar (1898), 6-7.

4. See Meredith, 32-33 on the influence of Alexander of Aphrodisias on Eunomius.

5. Eunomius, *Lib. Apol.* XV, (Vaggione, 26).

6. *Ibid.* XXV (Vaggione, 41).

7. See G. Kretschmar's remarks on the Pneumatomachians, *Studien zur Frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (1956) 8-15, as well as H. Dörries, *Der Beitrag Basilus zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (1956) 10.

8. Meredith, 77.

9. *Ibid.* 47.

10. "αὐτὴν εἶναι τὴν ὑπόστασιν, ἣν σημαίνει τοῦνομα". *Lib. Apol.* XII (Vaggione, 22); see also XIX (30).

with and supportive of Christian faith¹¹, there can be no doubt that he owed even more than did Origen to the systems of late Platonism. His treatment of the names borrowed from the thought of Iamblichus and Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Cratylus*¹², while the reification of Aristotelian logic must surely remind us, in however attenuated and simplified a form, of the system embodied in Proclus' later *Elements of Theology*. Rather as in Plotinus, Eunomius maintains a strict hierarchy of being: God, Logos (the Father's "solidified energy" and our demiurge¹³), the Spirit, and us. Through this series of causes we in turn ascend in order to achieve the vision of the "ultimate mystery"¹⁴ at the top. In certain respects, Eunomius thus comes very close to accomplishing precisely what some have accused Dionysius of attempting: the total surrender of Biblical Revelation to late Hellenistic philosophy. It is therefore of no little significance to our thesis that this capitulation should have occurred over a century before the appearance of the *CD* and, furthermore, have involved the most original and influential thinkers in Eastern Christendom, men whom we claim – and not only we – were among Dionysius' sources, in its refutation¹⁵. We turn, then, to the outlines of that refutation.

2. The Cappadocian response

a) Background

Beginning with the Cappadocians' historical background, it is perhaps enough to say that it had a name, Athanasius; a banner, the ὁμοούσιος; and a message best summarized in the war cry of Athanasius himself: αὐτός [the Logos] γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν¹⁶. Soteriology, the kerygma of human deification through God's Incarnation, set the themes that were to rule in the post-Athanasian *oikoumene* and determine the development of Christian doctrine – soteriology and "not systematic theology or cosmology"¹⁷. The latter two refer primarily to the Logos theology first articulated by the Apologists, elaborated by

11. See Vaggione, 278-279: Eunomius did not claim to understand God, only to know him. He therefore insisted on "the objective reference of words" in as much as the latter "provided an ultimate guarantee for the validity of revelation". Still, given faith, one is then "to pursue the full meaning of revelation in *logical analysis and critical reflection* [emphasis mine]" in order to arrive "at last at the One who is the source of all things".

12. Meredith, 48, cites Iamblichus' *de Myst.* VII.4 and *Vit. Pythag.* 87. He also cites Proclus, *In Crat.* 50/57, though only as an example of the sort of thought Eunomius worked in. See also R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence II* (Bonn: 1986) 128-159 on the Eunomians' sensitivity to contemporary Neoplatonist philosophy on the question of apophatic theology.

13. *Lib. Apol.* XXIV (Vaggione, 38).

14. Vaggione, 279.

15. See esp. the article by Ceslas Pera, "Denys le mystique et la θεομαχία", *RSTP* 25 (1936) 5-75, and our Introduction above, 37-38, notes 131-135.

16. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 54.3, ed. F. L. Cross (1939).

17. R. Reuther, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (1969) 130.

Origen, and further developed by the Arian arbiters. That older system was shattered by Nicea and the ὁμοούσιος. If the Word uniting humans to God had to be God, and not a kind of second God (δεύτερος Θεός) or, worse, a creature, then he could no longer be a mediator by essence. This had two major effects of particular importance for the Cappadocians (and so, Dionysius): 1) the Trinity of divine Persons could no longer be interpreted after the Middle or Neoplatonic manner as three distinct grades or declensions of reality, but instead as three realizations of the unique Godhead;¹⁸ and 2) an immense gulf was thus opened up in the "space" between God and world previously occupied by the Logos¹⁹. The generation of the Second and Third Persons had, furthermore, to be distinguished from the creation of the world. We thus find Athanasius speaking of God's generation by nature of the Son and his creation by "grace [χάριτι]" or "will [βουλήματι]" of the world²⁰. The distinction thus implied between "will" and "nature"²¹ points directly to the notion of the ἐνέργειαι or δυνάμεις elaborated by the Cappadocians – and central to the CD.

With regard to their personal background, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, his brother, and their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, were all men of the highest culture. This in turn meant a discerning knowledge of Greek philosophy which, perhaps, included Plotinus and, in Gregory of Nyssa at least, later Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus as well²². This knowledge and its application have led, again particularly in Nyssa's case, almost inevitably to modern accusations along the lines charted by Harnack of confusing Christianity with Hellenism. For example, Cherniss on the Nyssene recalls other scholars on

18. See the article by Dörries, "Υπόστασις: Wort und Bedeutungslehre" NAG (1955), esp. 82-83.

19. See the article by Torrance, "Spiritus Creator", in *Le Traité sur le Saint-Esprit de Saint Basile* (1971) 138, on the displacement of the Origenist νοητά/αἰσθητά distinction by "la distinction biblique entre le Créateur et la créature et par la liberté du Créateur d'être présent et actif dans sa création" as opposed to the apparent necessity requiring the Logos to mediate between the Father and the *logikoi*.

20. See *Con. Arian.* I.20; II.2; III.60-66 (PG XXVI 55A; 148B-152B, and 448C-464C respectively), and *De Inc.* 5.1.

21. See the article by Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in St. Athanasius" SP 6 (1962) esp. 46-48, 53-54, and 55-57.

22. The Cappadocians' knowledge of the Neoplatonists seems now to have been established. For Basil's use of Plotinus, see Dehnhard, *Die Abhängigkeit des heiligen Basilios von Plotin* (1964), as well as Prûche's "Introduction" to *Le Traité sur le Saint-Esprit* (SC 176: 1968) 59. For Nazianzus, see Reuther, 130ff. For a summary of philosophical influences on Gregory of Nyssa, see Daniélou, "Orientations Actuelles", in *Écriture et culture philosophique*, ed. Harl (1964) 4-17. For Plato in Gregory, see Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa* (1934); for Plotinus, see the lists compiled by Aubier in the latter's "Introduction" to *Traité de la Virginité* (SC 119, 1966) 116-117; and Leys, *L'Image de Dieu chez Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (1951) 46, note 4. For a cautionary word, however, about at least Basil's knowledge of Neoplatonism, see J. M. Rist, "Basil's 'Neoplatonism': Its Background and Nature", in *Basic of Caesarea I*, ed. P. J. Fenwick (Toronto: 1984) 137-220, esp. 190-220.

Dionysius: "Gregory... merely applied Christian names to Plato's doctrine and called it Christianity"²³. Once again, we do not ourselves see "the fusion of Christianity with monasticism and Platonic spirituality"²⁴ as necessarily a bundling together of irreconcilables. "Contemplation", as Lossky has justly noted, "is not the exclusive appanage of Platonism" since otherwise, in tending "toward communication with eternal realities... almost all religious speculation would be an unconscious Platonism"²⁵. Instead, as in our discussion of the expression *μυστήριον*, the critical questions concern what one understands to be the nature of those eternal realities and the modes of our communication with them. Here the three Cappadocians were profoundly Christian²⁶. That they were also equipped with what von Ivanka has called an "astonishing lack of prejudice with respect to Neoplatonic thought"²⁷ should not obscure that, as well as noting with fresh eyes²⁸ the treasures of Plato and Plotinus, their remarkably "broad point of view looked back beyond the... immediate controversies to the sources of Greek theology in Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, and Methodius"²⁹. Before all else, the independent use they made of Hellenic philosophy and vocabulary³⁰ was governed by their desire to remain faithful to the Greek Christian tradition while at the same time, impelled by controversies whose origins in Arius and his successors were rooted precisely in a dangerously uncritical acceptance of Hellenic thought, to correct and clarify those sources (Origen) in accordance with the lines laid down by Athanasius.

b) God's transcendence

Flatly opposed to Eunomius' concentration on the *ἀγέννητον* and ascription to it of "literal validity", the Cappadocians, here truly inheritors of Origen's anagogical and symbolic approach to Scripture, insisted on the variety of predicates describing God, an insistence that "necessarily involved large elements of metaphor and analogy"³¹. Basil will confess that we "know what is knowable of

23. Cherniss, 62-63.

24. Reuther, 15.

25. Lossky, *Vision of God*, 55.

26. Thus the monograph, in part a reaction to Cherniss, of Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique* (1944).

27. Von Ivanka, *Hellenisches und Christliches im Frühbyzantinischen Geistesleben* (1948) 41.

28. Ivanka, *Ibid.*, credits their independence at least in part to the "iranisch-persische Kultur" in the background of Cappadocian life which enabled the three to take up a relatively independent position with regard to Hellenic thought. "Iranian-Persian" is certainly rather vague. It is, though, unquestionable that Nyssa at least had ties to Mesopotamian ascetics, such as the author of the *Macarian Homilies*. See C. Stewart, "Working the Earth of the Heart" (Oxford: 1991) 12-69.

29. Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System" *DOP* 12 (1958) 100.

30. Leys, *L'Image*, 46 note 4. Daniélou, "Orientations", 7, points to Nyssa's use of "Plotin pour la mystique, Porphyre pour la logique, et Jamblique pour la cosmologie".

31. Stead, *Div. Substance*, 159.

God [τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ], but then add the all-important proviso: “but to know that which escapes our understanding is impossible”³². The unknowable is “the essence, which is not open to examination of any kind [ἀπερίοπτον παντί]”³³. What, then, is the γνωστὸν? It is that “which God has revealed to all men”³⁴. This includes the fact that he is Creator, known from revelation, together with other predicates from scripture. Such predicates are not enough, however, in and of themselves (ψιλῶ γράμματι). Rather, in opposition to Eunomius³⁵, Basil declares they require the exercise of investigation coupled with humble caution. They are “tropes” and “allegories”, and even so cannot lead us to God’s essence. Instead, and here he cites Heb 11:6, it is not “the investigation of what God is [τὸ τί ἐστίν], but “the confession that he is [τὸ ὅτι ἐστίν] which prepares our salvation”³⁶. Indeed, not even created essences are open to human knowledge³⁷, let alone God’s which is “inconceivable to the nature of man and wholly ineffable [ἄρρητος παντελῶς]”³⁸. God is the Creator (δημιουργός), and we a part (μέρος) of that creation wherein, thanks to revelation, we may discern signs of the activity of his goodness (ἀγαθότης) and wisdom (σοφία), but this knowledge constitutes the limits of our natural capacity and its appropriate responses are, first, faith and then worship³⁹. Eunomius’ ἀγέννητον may then legitimately express something which God is not – Basil equates it with ἄναρχος⁴⁰ or even ἄφθαρτος⁴¹ – but it is certainly no different from any other of the names serving the same function⁴². All of them are, finally, images deriving from our sensory modes of perception⁴³, are never wholly adequate to the unknowable God⁴⁴, and always require us “to surpass that which is humble and base in the expression [ὑπερβῆναι... τῆς ἐμφάσεως]”⁴⁵.

In a few passages St. Basil thus established the guidelines that the two Gregories were to follow and (especially Nyssa) develop. We reduce them to the following five: 1) God in essence, *in se* is wholly unknowable; but 2) he has

32. *Ep.* CCXXXV.

33. *Adv. Eunom.* I.14 (PG XXIX 544B).

34. *Ibid.* (544C ff).

35. See Vaggione, *Aspects of Faith*, 170-171: “[Basil’s] general proposition is that Scriptural statements about God are to be taken as symbols of the realities” – i.e., the heritage of Origen and background of the *DN*.

36. *Adv. Eunom.* I.14 (545A).

37. *Ibid.* I.13.

38. *Ibid.* I.14 (545A).

39. *Ep.* CCXXXV (Loeb, 378ff); also *Adv. Eunom.* II.32 (648Aff).

40. *Adv. Eunom.* I.15 (545Bff).

41. *Ibid.* I.9 (533Aff).

42. *Ibid.* I.10 (533D-536A). Note the use of περὶ Θεὸν for the attributes and see Chapter I above, 56-57.

43. *Ibid.* I.6 (524B).

44. *Ibid.* II.17 (605B).

45. *Ibid.* II.24 (625B).

revealed himself to us as Creator, and 3) in his creation we may discern certain signs of his activity as Creator, together with 4) the revelation he has given us in Scripture and especially in Christ. Nevertheless, 5) these signs and images are, precisely, signs, indicators, “tokens”⁴⁶. They are indeed divinely granted (and are not without a certain real correlate in God, to which we shall return below), but still they remain constructs, reflections of creaturely being, and therefore require the recognition that they can never be wholly adequate to the uncreated. Here, then “is the apophatic basis of all true theology”⁴⁷ and therewith, too, an important moment in the ancestry of the CD: every predicate applied to the Godhead, divinely given though each may be, requires negation – St. Basil’s ὑπερβῆναι.

In his *Second Theological Oration*⁴⁸, Gregory of Nazianzus develops this approach with respect to what Dionysius will call the νοητὰ ὀνόματα, taking as examples “spirit (πνεῦμα)”, “light (φῶς)”, “wisdom (σοφία)”, “justice (δικαιοσύνη)”, “mind (νοῦς) and “word (λόγος)”. Each and all of these, he points out, is derived either from things or states of being proper to created existence. Do we then, he asks, “behold the divine as it is in itself [αὐτὸ καθ’ ἑαυτό]” through, as it were “lumping the imagery together [ἐκ τῶν εἰκασμάτων συλλεγομένου]?” We cannot, for “the One is in his nature uncomposed and incomparable [ἀνείκαστον]”. Even, he notes elsewhere, the predicates bearing an “α” privative can tell us only that God is unlike us and that no “philosophizing” can truly approach him⁴⁹. How then, returning to the original passage, can one approach him, given both that “our mind wearies of transcending [ἐκβῆναι] the bodily”, and that “every reason-endowed [λογικὴ] nature desires God?” Gregory replies that there are two choices: either one may choose (as Eunomius) to declare one or another of those material/notional things God and so fall victim to idolatry, or else, drawn by their beauty and order (εὐτοξία), to use them as a “guide (ὁδηγός)” to that which is “beyond vision [ὑπὲρ ὄψιν]”. Here he foreshadows the principle we have outlined in Dionysius’ notion of the εἰκῶν:⁵⁰ the mystery is truly present in the seen while simultaneously insisting – through grace – on the transcending of the visible and, thereby implied, on transcending the limits and modes of created being. God’s transcendence is to be mirrored in human ἔκστασις.

Gregory of Nyssa, whose development of ἔκστασις we shall consider below, further emphasizes his brother’s declaration of God’s unknowability, the ultimate distinction (ἀνωτάτω διαίρεσις) is that between created and uncreated (κτιστόν - ἄκτιστον) nature, the latter being cause of all and the former as deriving from that

46. See our four points opening and concluding Chapter I above, 45 and 71-74.

47. Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 33.

48. Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Five Theological Orations*, ed. Mason (1899). The text discussed here in *Theological Oration* II.13, 41-43.

49. *Ibid.* II.9 (35).

50. See again Chapter I below, 71-74, together with Chapters II, 110-114 and 116-117; III, 127-130 and 154-155; and IV, 227-229.

unique source. The two are utterly distinct, without blending (ἐπιμείξια) or common characteristics and, as like may only be described by like, we, creatures, will seek in vain for any point of similarity between our nature and the divine⁵¹. God is utterly simple and in consequence above and beyond any name: “possessing one name alone expressive of his proper nature, that he is above [ὑπὲρ] every name”⁵². Thus to call any quality “the essence of God is to make it a god [θεοποιεῖν] and worship one’s own imagery”⁵³. It is proper indeed to understand of God that he is invisible and boundless and that everything about him which is contemplated (πᾶν τὸ περὶ αὐτὸ θεωρούμενον) is without change⁵⁴, but it remains inalterably the case that he is beyond not only name but every conjecture or thought (νόημα). The only notion adequate to him is that he is beyond knowledge (ὑπὲρ γνῶσιν)⁵⁵. The divine nature is thus known uniquely in its unknowability⁵⁶. Even the highest and most splendid of its names is, relative to the reality, “obscurity [ἀσάφεια] and silence [σιωπή]”⁵⁷. Borrowing almost certainly from Clement⁵⁸, Gregory further bolsters his vision of divine transcendence with the concept of God’s infinity (ἄπειρον, ὁρίστον) whereby he seeks to lay stress on God’s absolute dissimilarity to anything in the created realm⁵⁹ – and so to insist on the title, “infinite”, as most adequate to the divine essence⁶⁰. If, citing Ps 144:3-5, God’s glory has no bound (πέρας), and thus “the things around God are boundless [τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν ἀπέρωτα], so much more must be that One himself who, by essence, is never at any time comprehended by any bound or measure whatever”⁶¹.

While we do not find so great an emphasis in the *CD* on God’s infinity, the notion is certainly present⁶². All the more certainly in Dionysius are the arguments just outlined against the Eunomian position⁶³, many of the expressions being familiar to us from the *DN* and *MT*. Among them is the one just cited, the use of περὶ with the accusative, τὰ περὶ αὐτόν⁶⁴, which we have already noted

51. Gregory of Nyssa, *Con. Eunom.* III.6.66 (all citations from the Jaeger text); and for comment, see Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa* (1966), 144.

52. *Ibid.* I.683; also II.474-475 and 587.

53. *Ibid.* II.100.

54. *Ibid.* III.6.3.

55. *In Eccles.* VII (PG XLIV 728D); also *Con Eunom.* II.138.

56. “ἐν μόνῳ τῷ μὴ δύνασθαι καταληφθῆναι γινωσκομένη”. *Con. Eunom.* I.373.

57. *In Eccles.* I (632C).

58. See above, 259; and also Basil, *Adv. Eunom.* I.7 (525C).

59. See *Con. Eunom.* II.69-70.

60. See Mühlenberg, 131-137, for the differences between Gregory’s and Plotinus’ uses of the term. For the Nyssene, it is “höher als die Einfachheit”.

61. *Con. Eunom.* III.1.103-104.

62. See above, Chapter II, 92-93.

63. See Peras, “Denys le Mystique”, 36-39.

64. For example, *DN* III.1 (680B): τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν [the Trinity] ἰδρυμένα, referring to the gifts of God.

appearing several times. A certain distinction, i.e., from God's essence, would appear to be implied here.

c) God's immanence

If God is truly unnameable (ἄκατονόμαστον)⁶⁵, what then is the meaning of his names? What does it mean to say of them, as does Gregory of Nazianzus⁶⁶, that they are not indicative "of the things proper to him but of those about him?"⁶⁷ Does the "shadow-writing", then, the "certain unclear and weak" impression which they provide as an "image [ἰνδαλμα]" or "shadowing-forth [ἀποσκίασμα]" of God⁶⁸, bear any real relationship to the One so shadowed? Eunomius is wrong, yes, but if the name is not the thing, what is it? What can we know of God, and how?

We begin again with St. Basil. In a letter to Amphilochius of Iconium⁶⁹, the senior Cappadocian sets out the lines of reply which derive from the antinomy that would later prove fundamental to the *CD*. "We do claim to know the greatness of God", he writes, "and the power, and the wisdom, and the goodness [ἀγαθότης], and the Providence", but "not the essence". He goes on to list some divine attributes, creator, *philanthropos*, rewarder, etc., but denies that any, or all together, can be taken as signifying God's essence, and concludes:

We do indeed say that we know our God from his operations [ἐνέργειαι], but we are not enabled to draw near the essence itself; for, while the operations descend to us [αἱ ἐνέργειαι πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταβαίνουσιν], his essence abides unapproachable [ἀπρόσιτος].

The antinomy, God at once wholly unknowable, yet known and shared in, is clearly stated. While it may be objected that the Cappadocians can use ἐνέργεια as signifying simply the created effects of God's will⁷⁰, in the case just cited Basil ascribes God's "action upon the world... to energies, powers, or intermediaries which are in some sense distinguishable from his essence"⁷¹. The use of *περὶ* in the accusative⁷², the insistence that the divine essence has no "initiator term [λόγος

65. Gregory Nazianzus, *Theological Oration* IV.7 (134).

66. *Orat.* XXXVIII (PG 36 317B).

67. "οὐκ ἐκ τῶν κατ' αὐτόν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν περὶ αὐτόν". *Ibid.*; see also *Theol. Orat.* IV.19 (137-139), and IV.18 (135-137).

68. *Theol. Orat.* IV.17 (134-135).

69. *Ep.* CCXXXIV (Loeb, 370-376).

70. See, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beat.* VI (PG XLIV, 1629A) for an example of ἐνέργεια as equivalent to the results of God's activity.

71. Stead, *Divine Substance*, 166.

72. See Basil, *Ep.* CLXXXIX (Loeb, 58 and 68); *Adv. Eunom.* I.7 (524C); and I.16 (536B), together with examples already given. For its appearances in Gregory of Nyssa, see B. Krivocheine, "Simplicité de la nature divine et les distinctions en Dieu selon Saint Grégoire de Nysse", *Mess. PR* 23 (1974) 144 and 152-154.

μηνυτής]” while the sense (σημασία) of his names bears upon the περὶ Θεόν that are his “energies”⁷³, and the flat statement that creation is indicative of God’s power or wisdom... but not his essence⁷⁴, all these point to a distinction between God *in se* and *ad extra* which assumes different modes of divine being, and which is not due simply to our own limitations of understanding *qua* creatures. Let us note, too, that Basil is careful to point out, as against Eunomius and therefore as opposing the whole Neoplatonist doctrine of substantial intermediaries, that the “energies” or “powers” are not themselves substances⁷⁵. We find, lastly, that even if the names do thus have a real referent in God’s “powers”, and in spite of their limitations do bear the possibility of a certain true γνῶσις of God and so of participation in him⁷⁶, they still do not exhaust the divine mystery even *ad extra*⁷⁷.

Gregory of Nyssa takes up at greater length his brother’s outline. It is, to be sure, an outline which has been the source of considerable controversy in modern scholarship⁷⁸. When, therefore, we find Gregory stating that “the sense [λόγος] of essence and of energy is not the same”⁷⁹, we take him to be asserting the same “real distinction” we claim to find in Basil. Like his brother, and in more detail, Gregory asserts that the variety of names and the “activities” they represent neither conflict among themselves⁸⁰ since they point to different aspects of God’s δύναμις, nor compromise the unity of God’s nature⁸¹. They cannot, because they have (as with Basil) no substantial or personal existence in themselves. As aspects of the divine will, they cannot be considered independently of him who wills. They are “enhypostatized” in the Persons of the Trinity and do not constitute any independent, intermediary “principle”⁸². The divine “will” here recalls our citation

73. Basil, *Ep.* CLXXXIX (Loeb, 58).

74. Basil, *Adv. Eunom.* II.32 (648A).

75. *Ibid.* I.8 (528B): πῶς οὖν οὐ καταγέλαστον τὸ δημιουργικὸν οὐσίαν εἶναι λέγειν... καὶ ἀπαξ ἀπλῶς πᾶσαν ἐνέργειαν οὐσίαν τίθεσθαι; compare *DN* V.2 (816D-817A) and XI.6 (953CD), and Chapter I, 58 and note 105.

76. See esp. *Ibid.* I.7 (525AB).

77. *Ibid.* II.32 (648A).

78. See Chapter I above, note 107. With respect specifically to the Cappadocians and the essence/energies distinction, see Krivocheine, “Simplicité;” Meredith, *Studies in the Contra Eunomium*, 95 note 2 and 102-103; Florovsky, “Creation in St. Athanasius”, 68; Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 71-72; Leys, *L’Image*, 30; Mühlenberg, *Unendlichkeit*, 136-140, for an affirmative judgment. For a negative one, see Houdret, “OCD – Palamisme et les Cappadociens” *Istina* (1974) 260-271; and Balas, *Μετουσία Θεοῦ: Man’s Participation in God’s Perfections according to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (1965) 128. Differing opinions do not always obey confessional lines, thus Meredith, Leys, and Mühlenberg – to whom we may add the names of Stead, Sherwood, and Daniélou. See also the articles by A. de Halleux, “Palamisme et Scholastique” *RTL* IV (1973) 409-442, and “Palamisme et Tradition” *Ir* XLVIII (1975) 479-493; esp. the latter, 483ff.

79. *Con. Eunom.* I.420; see also II.359: the οὐσία is not ταὐτόν with the ἐνέργεια.

80. *Ibid.* II.478-479.

81. See *de hom. opf.* (PG 44 140AB), and *Con. Eunom.* II:353-354.

82. *Con. Eunom.* III.6.17: πάντοτε γὰρ ἐνεργὸν καὶ ἐνούσιον καὶ ἐνυπόστατον τῇ αἰδίῳ

from Athanasius, as well as Dionysius and the elimination of Neoplatonic intermediary hypostases in favor of the will or power or – the *CD* – *πρόοδοι* of God in transit, as it were, from uncreated transcendence into creation. Creation itself, according to Gregory, is simply God's "substantialized" will: ἐξήρθεσεν ἡ δύναμις οὐσίαν ποιῆσαι τὴν βούλησιν:⁸³ as soon as the *πρόοδος* "solidifies", so to speak, it is a created being and not God. It is this divine will, then, that is the world's being – or ground of being – and to which we, on discerning it in Creation, ascribe names⁸⁴. The divine will establishes the possibility of using "analogy" in rising to a certain knowledge of God. A "certain knowledge" because it is only to the *περὶ τὸ θεῖον*⁸⁵ that we may rise. Just as we noted in Dionysius, for Gregory created being finds its sources or models (the *DN*'s *λόγοι* or *παράδειγματα*) precisely in the *δυνάμεις* or "outgoings" of God, and not in his essence⁸⁶. The very name "God" is derived from the Creator's activities, *θεός* as coming (also the *DN*) from *θεάσθαι*⁸⁷, which in turn indicates that even here the knowledge we may gain from him is inexhaustible: God's *δύναμις* or *σοφία* is itself endless⁸⁸. One may express a portion (*μέρος*) of the divine *ἐνέργεια*, "but the *δύναμις* itself, whence derives the *ἐνέργεια*, let alone the nature which is source of the *δύναμις*", cannot be spoken, is *ἄφραστον*⁸⁹.

Although we speak of the "names" derived from his works, it is most important to recall that for Gregory, just as for Dionysius, the knowledge of God – that he is Creator at all – is always the gift and so the work of Revelation⁹⁰. The "names" are significant first of all because they come to us as the "words of Providence", i.e., of Scripture, and so as the adaptations of God's *φιλανθρωπία* to the needs of our weakness⁹¹. The following recalls the *CD* in several respects:

...according to the divine economy, just as the sun mingles the violence of its naked rays with the air in order to bring a light and warmth commensurate to its recipients, being itself in itself unapproachable for the weakness of our nature, just so does the divine *δύναμις*... infinitely transcending our nature and removed from participation, in manner as a mother full of

φύσει τὸ ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ αἰδίδιον ἐνθεωρεῖται θέλημα οὔτε ἀπὸ τινος ἰδιαζούσης ἀρχῆς... δίχα τοῦ θελήτου νοηθῆναι δυνάμενον; again, compare *DN* V.2 (816D-817A) and XI.6 (953CD).

83. *Ibid.* II.548; for comment, see Gaïth, *La liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse*, 33 and 39.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.* II.582-583; also II.140.

86. See Mühlenberg, *Unendlichkeit*, 136-140, and Gaïth, *La Liberté*, 85, on the divine life as "activity". The latter scholar points to the similar usage of "goodness" (114-115) and his list of Gregory's use of the *αὐτό* prefixes (124, note 22) displays interesting parallels with Dionysius' (e.g., the *αὐτοαγαθός*, - *ζωή*, - *δύναμις*, - *σοφία*, etc.).

87. *Con. Eunom.* II.585-586; and *In Cant.* IX (Jaeger, 334-335).

88. *Ibid.* II.127ff; also *De Beat.* VI (PG 44 1268B-1269A).

89. *De Beat.* (1280AB).

90. *Con. Eunom.* II.228 and 246.

91. *Ibid.* II.417-419.

compassion... ordain for human nature what it is capable of receiving, and, on account of this, fashions itself after the way of man [κατὰ ἄνθρωπον σχηματίζεται] in its varied theophanies [ποικίλαις θεοφανείαις], and speaks as man, and clothes itself in wrath and mercy and such like passions, that, through all its accommodations to us, it may take our infancy by the hand and lead it up through the words of Providence to touch the nature of God [χειραγωγείτο ἡ νηπιώδης ἡμῶν ζωή]⁹².

Here are echoes harking back to Origen's ἀναγωγή, as well as foreshadowings of the *CD*. The point in any case is clear. The names of God come to us from the Lord⁹³, reveal to us the many forms of his Providence⁹⁴ – i.e., not his nature but the “variety of his operations [τὸ ποικίλον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν] and his splendor”⁹⁵ – and cannot thus be dismissed as vain or meaningless noises. They are a result of his condescension⁹⁶ – and they are more than that, as we recall in Origen the Incarnation of the Logos in the words of Scripture, and in Dionysius the relations between word, image, and Incarnation.

But how then can Gregory declare Eunomius' study in vain, because “the names are without being [τῶν ὀνομάτων οὐκ ὄντων]”⁹⁷. He does so first of all because, unlike Eunomius, the ἐνέργειαι do not constitute for him subsistent realities. They instead refer ultimately to God's σοφία, remaining about the latter as a kind of “penumbra”⁹⁸. Thus, secondly, the names which for both writers refer to the ἐνέργειαι (save of course, for Eunomius, the ἀγέννητον) cannot be equated with independent entities. Literally, they do not exist. However, to take up the solar imagery again, neither do the sun's rays exist of themselves without reference to their source. Extending the metaphor, the same rays when seen from an angle do have a certain dependent being, or better, presence, but the impression of an independent existence vanishes as soon as the observer confronts them directly. One is then blinded by the unsoftened “violence [σφοδρόν]” of their source. We have of course encountered this imagery before – precisely in the *DN* and *MT*⁹⁹. Thus we find that Gregory compares the θεία δύναμις with “a kind of ray... flowing out of the sun's nature” in order to accuse his opponents of playing children's games, seeking through names – “syllogisms” – to catch the sunbeams in their hands¹⁰⁰. They cannot, and rightly so, because the object of their efforts is simply without “substance”.

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.* II.356.

94. *Ibid.* II.298.

95. *Ibid.* II.302-304; see also II.102.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.* III.60.

98. Here I am paraphrasing, Meredith, *Studies*, 95, note 2.

99. See Chapter I above, 57, note 101.

100. “οἷον ἀκτὶνὰ τινα τῆς ἡλιακῆς ἀπορρέουσας φύσεως”. *Con. Eunom.* II.81; recall the “sun” and “ray” imagery we found in Dionysius, Chapter I above, 57-58.

No substance, indeed, but it does have that certain “oblique” reality, and so we return to God’s economy and presence in the symbols he has given us. He has no need of “words and syllables”, but we do, and he therefore reveals himself to us through them. It is true that Gregory understands them as constructs, artifacts that we have made (or which have been made for us) and use to “inscribe” certain impressions and marks... on the motions of our understanding”¹⁰¹ in order to give the latter a kind of direction. It is also true that these “thought-symbols” must be subjected to rigorous examination (Dionysius will call it ἀφαίρεσις)¹⁰² and never simply worshipped as they stand. They alone cannot make God present to us¹⁰³. Nevertheless, they carry a kind of presence, “a certain brief residue [λείψανον] of the fragrance of divine sweetness [θεία εὐωδία]”¹⁰⁴, that they correspond somehow to an “appropriate reality in God”¹⁰⁵. Again, they are not the “μύρον of divinity” itself – “beyond every name and conception”¹⁰⁶ – but they do refer, point or are open to, the intuition of, and so encounter with, his “powers”. With our cooperation and effort they can act “to bring God into sight for us [τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῖν εἰς ὄψιν ἄγοντες]”¹⁰⁷ – a phrase which, interestingly, recalls the heart of our discussion above on the Eucharist in the *EH*. The latter is surely no accident, rather we maintain that for both Gregory and Dionysius a certain sacramental character is attached to the names of God. We do not mean to suggest that either man places them on a level with Eucharist¹⁰⁸, but simply that for both the notional as well as the physical is understood as having the capacity to become a vehicle of grace, a “place of meeting”. The names, as we have said, are the gift of grace, a fruit of that process whereby God has condescended to reveal himself and to give us a share in his life: “for he who is invisible by nature becomes visible in his activities, [and] is beheld [καθορῶμενος] in certain of things which are about him”¹⁰⁹. Through the names, then, we may arrive at an “oblique” apperception of him, of the “rays” of divinity which are without number¹¹⁰. Afterwards, though, in turning the eye toward the uncreated glory of majesty, “it is time for silence”¹¹¹.

d) Trinity

The sacramental nature of God’s names directs us back to the Cappadocians’

101. *Ibid.* II.168.

102. See Chapter II above, 108-112, esp. 111-112.

103. *Con. Eunom.* II.577.

104. *In Cant.* I (Jaeger, 36-37).

105. Krivocheine, “Simplicité”, 141.

106. *In Cant.* I (Jaeger, 36-37).

107. *De Beat.* VI (1269A).

108. See Daniélou, *Theol. Myst.*, 162 and 244-246.

109. *De Beat.* VI (1269A).

110. See Mühlenberg, *Unendlichkeit*, 186FF.

111. *In Eccles.* VII (732C); also 732D; καιρὸς τοῦ ταῦτα σιγᾶν [as beholding the uncreated, for:] κρείττων ἐν τούτοις ἡ σωπῇ. Recall *MT* 1033B.

point of departure in opposing Eunomius, and to their inheritance from Athanasius: the hope of salvation as deification rests in the co-divinity of the Son with the Father, and of the Spirit with the Son¹¹². The names as sacramental cannot, for example, be said truly to be unless the Incarnation, foundation of all sacraments as the communication of God to us via created media, be truly God in the flesh. Similarly, the “sanctifying power” of the Spirit cannot properly be hallowing without the Hallower being on the divine side of the Creator-creature divide¹¹³. We find ourselves otherwise permanently “out of touch” with God, without sacraments, with the Son¹¹⁴ and Spirit¹¹⁵ reduced to the level of “ministering spirits”, and in addition burdened with a doctrine of God resembling nothing so much as the pagans’ polytheism – greater and lesser gods¹¹⁶. This “polytheism” is of course nothing other than the Mid- or Neoplatonist sequences of hypostases as mediated by Origen and rendered more or less explicit by the Arian schools. Following Athanasius, the Cappadocians therefore refuse to acknowledge the Three as successive moments, or stages, in the descent of the One to the many. The Three are God and God, as declared in Revelation, is One because his will and operation are one:¹¹⁷ “the identity of the operation [ἡ τῆς ἐνεργείας ταυτότης] for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit clearly demonstrates the inalterability of the divine nature”¹¹⁸. None of the activities of God *ad extra*¹¹⁹ can then be ascribed to one or another of the Persons. The name itself of “divinity (θεότης)” refers “not to the hidden essence but to the one and unique activity of the Three”¹²⁰. All names, πάντα τὰ θεοποιητῆ νοήματα τε καὶ ὀνόματα, belong thus in common to each of the Trinity¹²¹.

We find this position developed at greatest length in Gregory of Nyssa’s *That there are not Three Gods*¹²². The names, both of the Persons and of their activities, are indeed plural, but the ἐνεργεῖαι are to be referred to the common activity of the divinity which for each of the Three is “one and the same”¹²³. As Gregory says

112. For Athanasius on the Triad as one God, *Ep. ad Serap.* IV.7 (PG XXVI 648AB) and on the divinity of the Holy Spirit assuring our share in God, *Ibid.* I.24 (535B): “If the Holy Spirit were a creature, we should have no participation in God in him... and be strangers to the divine nature”, trans. Shapland (1951) 126. See also Basil, *De Spir. Sanc.* I.2 (Prûche, SC 176, 252).

113. See again Basil, *De Spir. Sanc.* XVI-XXIV (Prûche, 274-454); *Adv. Eunom.* III.2 (660A-D); and Dörries, *Der Beitrag Basilios*, 11.

114. Basil, *Adv. Eunom.* II.21 (617C-620A).

115. *Ibid.* III.2 (660A).

116. Basil, *Ep.* CCXLIII (Loeb, 444-446).

117. See Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 257; and J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrine* (1959) 266.

118. Basil, *Ep.* CLXXXIX (Loeb, 66).

119. Save, of course, the Incarnation itself – recall DN II 644C.

120. Basil, *Ep.* CLXXXIX (Loeb, 68).

121. *Ibid.*, 58.

122. *Quod non sint* (Jaeger, 38-53). See DN II 640Aff and Chapter I above, 51-54.

123. *Ibid.* 44.

elsewhere, “the life creating power proceeds [πρόεισιν] into realization [ἐνέργεια] in like manner from Father and Son”¹²⁴. Whether for our own providence or for the universal economy¹²⁵, they are One because they act as One: “The holy Trinity does not effect every activity dividedly according to the number of Hypostases, rather the motion [κίνησις] and distribution [διάδοσις] of the [divine] good will is one”¹²⁶. He illustrates this, with, again, θεότης as a divine activity¹²⁷, goes on¹²⁸ to cite the activities in common of judgment (κρίσις), wisdom (σοφία), power (δύναμις), and salvation (σωτηρία)¹²⁹, and finally – of particular importance for us in relation to the *DN* – declares that all πρόνοια and κηδεμονία is “one and not three”¹³⁰. The Trinity *ad extra*, i.e., in its Providence, is one “without distinction”¹³¹, and from the unity of Its ἐνέργεια “we learn the indivisibility of [Its] glory [τὸ ἀδιαίρετον τῆς δόξης]”¹³².

The above is clearly relevant to the Dionysian understanding of the names, the πρόοδοι - διακρίσεις of God, particularly as set forth in *DN* II. We see now that Dionysius could not, as has been suggested he should have done¹³³, either identify the Persons with any one of the names (Brons suggests οὐσία - ζωή - νοῦς after the pattern of Augustine) or not refer the names to “the whole divinity [ὅλη ἡ θεότης]”¹³⁴. To do so in his milieu would have been to fall into the same metaphysical trap that swallowed first Origen, and then the Eunomians, i.e., Dionysius would in that case have been identifying Father, Son, and Spirit with the *ad extra* of Godhead and so precisely with the declensions of being in descent from the One of the Neoplatonists. Following the Cappadocians, all names – save those of the Persons – had to be ascribed to the Three in concert, to the unique Providence (δύναμις) which may in turn explain the Areopagite’s freedom in ascribing divine activities, without apparent discrimination, now to Providence, then to Jesus, or to the Thearchy, or to the Spirit. In our view, Dionysius is here instead clearly the inheritor of the Cappadocians just as, indeed, he is their successor with respect to his presentation of the Three as the distinctions *ad intra* of divinity.

Returning, then, to his predecessors, we find the Cappadocians faced with a difficulty: if none of the divine Persons can be exclusively identified with any of their common activities, why and how are they to be distinguished at all? They all

124. *Con. Eunom.* III.10.33. The πρόεισι is interesting in relation to Dionysius and the language of πρόοδοι.

125. *Quod non sint*, 47.

126. *Ibid.* 48.

127. *Ibid.* 45-47.

128. *Ibid.* 49-50.

129. *Ibid.* 52; see also Gregory’s *Ep.* XXIV, (ed. Pasquali, 75).

130. *Ibid.* 50-51.

131. *Ibid.* 48: ἀκατακρίτως δι’ ἀλλήλων... ἐνεργοῦνται.

132. *Ep.* XXIV, 76.

133. Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 129.

134. *DN* II 640Aff.

categorically affirm that there is a distinction (διάκρισις)¹³⁵. They will accept no modalism, τὸ τοῦ Σαβελλίου κακόν¹³⁶. There were two reasons for their insistence on “the triplicity of divine hypostases” as, in fact, primary¹³⁷. First, they claimed to base themselves on Revelation, which had delivered to the Church the names of Father, Son, and Spirit as separate yet inseparably linked¹³⁸ in the work or “activity” of salvation¹³⁹. Secondly, they were the heirs of Origen¹⁴⁰ whose emphasis on three distinct Persons they kept while denying themselves the metaphysical structures he had adapted to justify the distinction and clarify the relations. They were thus obliged to supply others which could not be construed as suggesting any difference or degrees of honors¹⁴¹ attaching to the Three. Any particular predicate, as just noted, would have suggested, in a period and area already familiar with Porphyry and Iamblichus, precisely the sort of graded distinctions they were at pains to avoid¹⁴². They fell back on the personal Names themselves which, as sanctioned solely through Revelation, provided the uniquely acceptable means of differentiation. “Father”, “Son”, and “Spirit” therefore signified neither “essence” nor “activity”, but “relation [σχέσις]”¹⁴³. The Father they identified by τὸ ἀγέννητον, the Son by τὸ γεννητόν, and the Spirit by τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, though without any of the emanationist¹⁴⁴ or, worse, temporal¹⁴⁵ associations that might be drawn from, in particular, the latter two names. It goes without saying, of course, that these names do not imply any crude anthropomorphism. We are to conceive the Three at once, together yet distinct, and in mode of being beyond comprehension¹⁴⁶. It should be noted that the use of σχέσις does not imply that the Cappadocians held a purely “relational” understanding of the Persons. The relation does not constitute the Person, rather “the hypostasis is contemplated in the particularity [ἐν τῷ ἰδιώματι... θεωρεῖται] of Fatherhood, Sonship, or sanctifying power”¹⁴⁷. Basil especially insisted upon the ὑπόστασις as the

135. For the use of this term in Basil, see *Ep. XXXVIII* (Loeb, 204 and 210). The latter citation contrasts the Hypostases with the κοινωνία of the Godhead; thus compare the DN's distinction ἡνωμένα - ἐνώσεις/διακεχωρισμένα - διακρίσεις (636Cff).

136. Basil, *Ep. CCXXXVY* (Loeb, 402).

137. See Prestige, *God*, 242-243.

138. See Basil, *De Sp. Sanc.* X on Matt 28:19 (332ff).

139. Basil, *Ep. XXXVIII* (Loeb, 204-206) on I Cor 12:11.

140. Prestige, *God*; see also Harnack, *Hist. Dog.* IV, 84, although the latter fails to appreciate the Origenist understanding of the ὑποστάσεις, thus see Kelly, *Doctrines*, 235.

141. Thus Basil on the ὁμοτιμία due the Spirit, *De Sp. Sanc.* (416ff).

142. How much more so Dionysius! The Cappadocians, however, did admit a certain precedence in order: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as authorized by Scripture; see Galtier, *Le Saint Esprit* (1946) 129.

143. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theol. Orat.* III.16 (98).

144. *Ibid.* III.2 (76).

145. *Ibid.* III.3 (76); see also Basil, *Ep. LII* (Loeb, 330) and esp. *Ep. XXXVIII* (210).

146. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep. XXIV* (73); Basil, *Ep. CLXXXIX* (Loeb, 63); and Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theol. Orat.* V.5 (155).

147. Basil, *Ep. CCXIV* (Loeb, 234).

particular (ἴδιον) and the essence as the general (κοινόν) of divinity¹⁴⁸, although always with the proviso that the triune realization of Godhead is known only via “the distinguishing characteristics [γνωριστικαὶ ἰδιότητες]”¹⁴⁹ of the Personal names given in Revelation. Here, too, we may note the Dionysian faithfulness to the Cappadocian inheritance: Dionysius’ own care to ascribe no distinguishing traits to the Persons save the “Fatherhood”, “Sonship”, and “Spirit”¹⁵⁰ sanctioned by Scripture and Tradition.

The last directs us to two final points concerning Cappadocian triadology and God’s unity. Dionysius’ assertion that in God there is οὐδὲ μόνας οὐδὲ τριάς has been known to raise eyebrows¹⁵¹ and lend weight to the old charges of covert monism. But here, too, he is once again following the Cappadocians’ lead. The latter had some difficulty with “numbers” and God, at least in so far as they were obliged to explain how their emphatic “triplicity” was also a unity¹⁵². They advanced three arguments in favor of divine unity, the first of which, unity of will and activity, we have already discussed. The following two, number and monarchy, are related to it. As God’s operation is one and not three, so the Three are One in having a unique source (πηγὴ) or cause (αἰτία) in the Person of the Father from whom both Son and Spirit derive their subsistence (ὑφεστᾶναι)¹⁵³. The Son is generated as the eternal and substantial image of the Father¹⁵⁴ while the Spirit proceeds as the living “Breath of his mouth”¹⁵⁵. Basil calls this the “pious dogma”¹⁵⁶, and Gregory of Nyssa the “rule” of the monarchy (τὸ τῆς μοναρχίας κρᾶτος)¹⁵⁷. The Father alone is the ἀρχὴ of the Godhead. Once again, however, they are compelled to insist that the order (τάξις) of derivation from the one

148. *Ibid.*; also *Adv. Eunom.* II.41 (577D), and elsewhere frequently.

149. *Adv. Eunom.* II.28 (637B), and again often.

150. *DN* II 641Dff. We might note, too, the use of ἄνθη and the rainbow analogy in the *Ep.* XXXVIII (Loeb, 214) usually ascribed to Basil and Dionysius’ of ἄνθη and ὑπερούσια φῶτα (645B) for the Trinity. The latter’s is usually exclusively cited as an example of Proclus’ influence (e.g. Koch, *Beziehungen*, 161-162, and more recently, J. M. Rist, “Mysticism and Transcendence”, 213-225), and esp. Saffrey, “Nouveaux Liens”. For the connection between the *DN* and *Ep.* XXXVIII, see also S. Lilla, “Introduzione allo Studio dello Ps.-Dionigi l’Areopagita” *Aug* 22 (1982) 533-577, esp. 553.

151. *DN* XIII (980D). Eyebrows were asked to rise at an address given by Jaroslav Pelikan, “The Domestication of Dionysius”, at the VIIIth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 1979, published as “The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality”, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: 1987) 11-24.

152. That they must have been obliged to do so often and to have sustained frequent accusations of tritheism is evidenced by Nyssa’s treatise and, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus’ *Theol. Orat.* III.13.

153. See Basil, *Adv. Eunom.* II.25 (629AB) for the Son, and *Ep.* XXXVIII (Loeb, 206) for the Spirit.

154. *Adv. Eunom.* II.16 (605A).

155. *De Sp. Sanc.* XVIII.64 (Prûche, 408).

156. *De Sp. Sanc.* XVIII.47 (412).

157. *Ep.* V (Pasquali, 30-31).

source does not set up either a difference in substance (πραγμάτων)¹⁵⁸ or three divinities, i.e., the hypostases as successive emanations after the Arians, but that the Persons subsist together as One¹⁵⁹. They are, in other words, once more obliged to assert the divine incomprehensibility: “there is something ineffable and inconceivable to be understood in both the communion [κοινωνία] and distinction [διάκρισις]” of the Trinity¹⁶⁰.

It is this insistence upon the ultimately unknowable character of God’s being and modes of existence that directs their denunciation of Arian subordinationism (ὑπαριθμεῖσθαι)¹⁶¹ or, indeed, of the application of “number” in any way to God. Numeration belongs properly, and exclusively, to the created and particularly the corporeal realm: “whatever is uncircumscribed [the uncreated] is not numbered, and that which is not numbered cannot be conceived of as multiple”¹⁶². “One is God and Father”, writes Basil, “and one only-begotten Son and one Holy Spirit [εἷς... εἷς... ἓν]; each of the hypostases we announce singly and, whenever they are to be number together, we are not borne astray into polytheism by an undisciplined arithmetic [ἀπαίδευτος ἀρίθμησις]”¹⁶³. In the divine arithmetic, therefore, thrice one equals one. This is precisely the view maintained in *DN* XIII.3 – down, indeed, to the “one... one... one” sequence¹⁶⁴ and the final denial of number as adequate to God¹⁶⁵. The Cappadocian theology of the Trinity is well summarized in the following passage from Gregory of Nazianzus, which also recalls *DN* II’s metaphor of the many lamps and single light:

...for us God is one [εἷς], and it is in relation to the One [ἓν] that the things from him [τὰ ἐξ αὐτοῦ] have their reference, though they are believed to be three. For the One is not more nor the Other less God, neither is the One prior and the Other later. It is not divided in will nor parcelled-out in power... the divinity is undivided in divisions [ἀμέριστος... ἐν μεμερισμένοις]. Indeed, it is in manner, as it were, a single blending [σύγκρασις] of light in three suns bordering one another [ἐχόμενοι ἀλλήλων], so that when we look to the divinity, both the first cause [αἰτία] and monarchy, it appears to us as One, and when, on the other hand, toward those in whom Deity [subsists], which are from the first cause atemporally and of the same glory, we worship Three [τρία τὰ προσκηνούμενα]¹⁶⁶.

158. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theol. Orat.* V.5 (151).

159. *Ibid.* V.9 (156).

160. Basil, *Ep.* XXXVIII (Loeb, 210); see also Nyssa, *Ep.* XXIV (Pasquali, 73).

161. See Esp. Basil, *De Sp. Sanc.* VI.13ff and XVIII.44ff (Prûche, 286 and 402ff respectively).

162. “ἐν πλήθει θεωρηθῆναι οὐ δύναται”. Gregory of Nyssa, *Quod non sint* III.1 (Jaeger, 53).

163. Basil, *De Sp. Sanc.* XVIII.44 (Prûche, 404), and *Adv. Eunom.* III.6 668CD.

164. *DN* XIII (980B) and see Chapter I above, 52-53.

165. *Ibid.* 981A and again Chapter I, 52.

166. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theol. Orat.* V.14 (162-163); compare *DN* II 641AB.

Summary: In refuting Eunomius' subordinationism and reification of terminology the Cappadocians accomplished the transformation of pagan discourse about God that we have outlined above in the *DN*. The assertion that Dionysius systematically destroyed the system of late Neoplatonic theology is entirely correct¹⁶⁷. Our point is simply that he contributed nothing that had not been solidly established in the Greek Christian tradition for over a century – aside, of course, from his baroque prose and handling of the Names (from Chapter IV of the *DN*) in roughly the same sequence as in Neoplatonist commentaries of the *Parmenides*. In, essence, however the purport of his discourse is the same as what we have just traced in his Christian predecessors, down even to one scholar's complaints about the "ontological no-man's land" occupied by the *δυνάμεις*¹⁶⁸, the lack of characteristics assigned to the Persons of the Trinity other than their names and mutual relations, and their assignment to the *ad intra* of God rather than the *ad extra*¹⁶⁹. All this in the *CD* was the result – rather, the re-statement – of the Cappadocians' correction of certain trends in Christian thought beginning properly with Origen's adaptation of Middle Platonist hierarchy, and crystallizing in Eunomius' extreme Arianism. At the same time, the Cappadocians accomplished, with the aid of such predecessors of Origen as Philo and Clement, that reply to Plotinus that we find again in the *CD* and, in fact, that runs through the history of subsequent Greek Christian theology down to Gregory Palamas and the present day. The heart of their reply lay in their recognition of God's radical transcendence, wherein they certainly sided as much with Plotinus as with Philo and Clement (and Scripture), together with the simultaneous assertion of his immanence as revealed, first, in the Bible and, preeminently, in the Incarnate Word. They absolutely rejected, however, the pagan philosopher-mystic's intermediate hypostases: God as subsistence is proper alone to the co-equal Trinity of Revelation¹⁷⁰, while the characteristics of Plotinus' *Noûs*, or of the more complex intermediate grades of divinity elaborated by his successors, belong strictly to the non-hypostatic "penumbra" of God already adumbrated in the writings of Philo and Clement, the *δυνάμεις* or *ἐνέργειαι*. Any non-material, hypostatic entities, i.e., the angels (as we shall see momentarily) were assigned to the category of created being. Between the two, God and creation, there neither is nor can be any of that continuity of being which we find in the pagans and which is implied by Origen.

While there is no continuity, there is still "contact", encounter, participation. The Cappadocians' very insistence on God's radical unknowability allows them to assert his freedom of self-communication, one which has extended even to incarnation in space and time. We recall at this point our association of their

167. Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 164-165.

168. *Ibid.* 166.

169. See Meredith, *Studies*, 104.

170. See Dörries, "Υπόστασις", 82-83.

treatment of the divine names with the notion of sacrament, that presence of the Mystery, of the God of Revelation, of Christ, which is discernable and so participable¹⁷¹ within and through the conditions of the present age. Here, too, they are contributors to the Dionysian vision as well as the disciples, however critical, of Origen.

3. The eternal ascent: salvation in Christ according to Gregory of Nyssa

The influence of Origen is particularly marked in the writing of Gregory of Nyssa, whose presentation of the shape of creation, fall, and redemption is both the most systematic of the Cappadocian writers and so the most important as a predecessor of the *CD*. We therefore turn to the discussion below which will correspond to our points three through six.

a) Christ, Incarnation, Church and creation: outlines of a sacramental vision

i) *The infinite mystery*

Gregory parts company sharply with Origen in understanding the Incarnation as a radical departure, a truly new beginning: "for the foundation [κατασκευή] is the new creation of the world in which... even heaven is fashioned anew [κτίζεται καινός]"¹⁷². This new creation has come to be because God, "infinite and immeasurable" in his power, has taken on our nature, "mingled" himself inseparably (yet without alteration) with it, and filled it with the light of divinity¹⁷³. Christ is the eternal mystery tabernacled among humanity. Through this tabernacle, his body embracing heaven and earth¹⁷⁴, he provides us with that which is at once the milieu of our deification and the object of our contemplation:

...thus he who looks to this new creation which is the Church, beholds in it him who is and who comes to be all things in all, who leads knowledge by the hand up through things finite [χωρητὰ] and comprehended by our faith toward the infinite [χειραγωγούμενος τὴν γνῶσιν πρὸς τὸ ἀχώρητον]¹⁷⁵.

Here in outline is Gregory's whole mystical theology of transcendence and ecstasy, infinity and ἔκστασις, γνῶσις and μετουσίᾳ. It is all rooted in Christ and his Church. The details of that outline have been admirably dealt with in other

171. We would be wary of drawing over-sharp distinctions between epistemology and ontology, knowledge and participation, in the Cappadocians; see the debate in *ECR IX* (1977), esp. the articles by Williams, "The Philosophical Structures of Palamism", esp. 43-44; and the reply by Ware, "The Debate about Palamism", 59-60.

172. *In Cant.* XIII (PG 44 1049B).

173. *Ep.* III (Pasquali, 21-24, esp. 21): διὰ παντὸς τοῦ συγκρίματος ἡμῶν τῆς θεότητος τὴν ἀκτῖνα διαγαγών, διὰ ψυχῆς λέγω καὶ σώματος, ὅλον τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τῷ ἰδίῳ φωτὶ προσ- ηρείωσε; see also *Cat. Orat.* XXVI (ed. Srawley [1903] 101).

174. *Vit. Moys.* II.174-183 (ed. Daniélou, SC 1, 2d ed. [1955] 85-89).

175. *In Cant.* XIII 1052A.

studies¹⁷⁶. We wish simply to note the ways in which Gregory develops Origen and prepares the way for Dionysius. Gendle's fine phrase, 'the infinity enclosed in a span of the Incarnation'¹⁷⁷, points us in the right direction. It is Gregory's insistence on God's transcendence, infinity, that paves the way toward a near complete reevaluation of creation, Incarnation, anagogy, the knowledge of God and union with him. Everything becomes, as it were, "infected" with infinity. Centered on Christ, the mysteries of creation and revelation, contemplation and ascent, God and humanity, are all found to turn on deeper paradoxes, on antinomies, and to insist upon unceasing appropriation, to be ever in motion around and into Christ, the center. "Infinity within a span" thus also points toward the ἑνθεος πολιτεία, the new, theandric reality at the core of the Dionysian vision, and so toward the mystery of the icon.

ii) *Creation and kinesis*

We begin with infinity's infection of creation. Origen's pre-lapsarian world of co-equal νόες, whose contemplative stillness is broken by κόρος and procession into multiplicity, will no longer suffice. Knowledge of and participation in an infinite Creator requires unceasing motion¹⁷⁸. As later in the *DN*, Gregory understands motion and rest (κίνησις/στάσις) as at once divine activities¹⁷⁹ and fundamental constituents of created being: "for all the phenomena in creation that come into being according to the divine will are products [ἐγκονα] of motion and rest"¹⁸⁰.

iiia) The angels

Insistence on motion applies as much to the angelic world as to our own, however marked the latter may be by the Fall¹⁸¹. Gregory's scheme of created being corresponds roughly to that of the *CD*¹⁸² highest are the angels, below them and occupying a position linking intelligible and sensible, humans, followed by irrational (animals) and non-sentient (plants) life, and finally inorganic matter¹⁸³.

176. For example, Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, Gaïth, *Liberté*, and Balas, *Μετουσία*.

177. Gendle, *Apophatic*, 375.

178. *DN IX* (916B-D); see Chapters I above, 68-70 and II, 87-96.

179. *De Hom. Op. I* (PG 44 128C).

180. *De Hom. Op. I* (129A).

181. See esp. von Balthasar, *Présence et Pensée: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse* (1942), 1-36 for κίνησις as both inherent and as particularly marked by the Fall.

182. Compare the ladders of created being charted by Balas, *Μετουσία*, 52, in Gregory, and by Brons, *Gott u.S.*, 39, in Dionysius.

183. Matter itself is non-existent, or rather, a "conjunction" of intelligible qualities originating in an act of divine intelligence; see *In Hex. XIII-XIV* (PG 44, 212B-213B) and the articles by Armstrong, "The Theory of the non-existence of Matter in Plotinus and the Cappadocians" *SP 5* (1962) 427-429; and by J. F. Callaghan, "Greek Theology and Cappadocian Cosmology" *DOP 11* (1958) 42. Compare Gregory with Dionysius' rather more tentative view, *DN IV 729A*, where the question is left open.

There is no question of these orders being the result of any pre-cosmic fall (although Gregory will concede something to Origen in thus explaining the origin of the passions). Instead, the angels, for example, were from their beginnings the created intelligible world (κόσμος νοητός), bodiless¹⁸⁴, immaterial and ranked in different orders of activity and dignity – an anticipation of the *CD* which, while striking, is surpassed by a passage from Gregory of Nazianzus that comes astonishingly close to Dionysius¹⁸⁵. For all their dignity, though, they remain creatures which means in turn that they are infinitely distant from the measureless deity and consequently ever in motion toward knowledge of him. True, their αἰών is not our χρόνος, the “fallen” time of loss and dissolution¹⁸⁶, yet it is not equivalent to God’s eternity, but recalls instead the αἰώνιος which Dionysius ascribes to them¹⁸⁷. Their eternal ἐπέκτασις in Gregory, a “changelessness” which “implies... a dynamic movement toward the Good”¹⁸⁸, is also suggested in the Areopagite’s discussion of angelic purification¹⁸⁹.

iib) Humanity

If static perfection is inapplicable even to the created νοητά, it is even less so for humanity. Our progress – or procession (πρόοδος) – into the Good is to have no rest (στάσις) “since there is no conceivable limit to that which is being traversed”¹⁹⁰. While it is true that we do not find in Gregory the vocabulary of λόγος and ἀναλογία such as we have outlined it in Dionysius¹⁹¹, the Nyssene’s anthropology nonetheless reflects the same inherent thrust toward self-transcendence¹⁹². The tension between transcendent origin (ἀρχή) and goal (τέλος) requires unceasing motion: “having been translated from non-being into being by divine power [θεία δύναμις]”¹⁹³, we must be ever in motion (ἀεικίνητος)¹⁹⁴ knowing no “satiation [κόρος]”, for our repose is the journey itself, “both

184. See Turmel, “Histoire de l’angélologie jusqu’au VI^e siècle après Jésus Christ” *RHL* III (1898) 425 and 428-429 for the novelty of Gregory’s insistence on “bodiless;” and Balas, 133.

185. *Theol. Orat.* II.31 (70-72), esp.: “... ἐλλαμπομένας τὴν καθαρωτάτην ἑλλαμψιν ἢ ἄλλως ἄλλην κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς φύσεως καὶ τῆς τάξεως... τοσοῦτον τῷ καλῷ μορφουμένους καὶ τυπουμένους, ὥστε ἄλλα γίνεσθαι φῶτα καὶ ἄλλους φωτίζειν δύνασθαι ταῖς τοῦ πρώτου φωτὸς ἐπιρροαῖς καὶ διαδόσεσι. Λειτουργοὺς θεοῦ θελήματος... πάντα εἰς ἓν ἀγούσας, πρὸς μίαν σύννευσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα δημιουργήσαντος”. Note especially the penultimate phrase: “leading all into one”.

186. *In Hex.* (848B).

187. *DN X* 937A-940B.

188. Gendle, *Apophatic*, 376.

189. See our discussion in Chapters II above, 90-95 and III, 140.

190. *Cat. Orat.* 21 (82-83).

191. See Völker, *Kontemplation*, 82-83, but also Roques’ critique, “À propos des sources”, 455.

192. *De Beat.* VII 1280C: ἐκβαίνει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος; so see Chapter II above, 96-97, 100-101, and 114-116.

193. *Cat. Orat.* 6 (34).

194. *De Virg.* VI.2 (ed. Aubineau, *SC* 119 [1966] 348).

rest and motion are one and the same"¹⁹⁵. The same *θεία δύναμις* that brings us into being constitutes as well the "end" of our striving¹⁹⁶ or, put another (and from Dionysius more familiar) way: we are called ever increasingly to show forth in ourselves the divine *ἐνέργεια*. This process of likening to God (*ὁμοίωσις*) is at once the particular characteristic (*ἴδιος χαρακτήρ*) of humanity¹⁹⁷ and, in as much as it is endless, the definition of our beatitude¹⁹⁸. To be ever in process of becoming God by grace, thus of transcending created being, is the definition of the image of God.

Gregory (and we follow others¹⁹⁹) is representative here of an attitude common to Greek patristic thought that we have also noted in Dionysius. He makes no distinction between "natural" and "super-natural". Rather, he insists that nature presupposes grace, that creation is not itself unless transparent to its Creator. As von Ivanka has it: "its [the creature's] essence consists in nothing other than this openness for participation; it is, essentially, nothing other than the openness itself"²⁰⁰. Secondly, therefore, the image of God in humanity is less any particular faculty or characteristic, e.g. Origen's *Νοῦς*, than it is a kind of vector or channeling of motion, an activity or activities – centered, to be sure, in the *νοῦς* but nonetheless incorporating the whole human being²⁰¹ – which is ever in process of realization. We say activities purposely in that Gregory does not, as an Augustine does, discover in the *imago Dei* any vestiges of the Triune God. The image is found rather in an ever-growing transparency, through participation in grace, to the whole scope of those virtues, powers or activities through which God is revealed *ad extra*, i.e., precisely as adumbrated in the "names" or *ἐπιθεωρούμενα* of God²⁰². "For the image", he writes, "in as much as it is lacking in nothing ascribed to the archetype, is properly image; and according to just that measure by which it falls short of the archetype, is not image"²⁰³.

In addition, then, to the *ἀναλογία/λόγος* implication of his understanding of *κίνησις*, we find Gregory's *εἰκὼν/ὁμοίωσις* paralleled in Dionysius' vocabulary of *θεοειδής* and *θεομίμησις*²⁰⁴. Just as in the *CD*, for Gregory the "vector" inherent

195. *Vit. Moys.* II.243 (110).

196. See PG 46 245CD, and Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις Θεῶν: Von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa* (1952) 113.

197. In *Ps.* XII (PG XLIV, 557C).

198. In *Ps.* I 433C.

199. For example, von Ivanka, *Hellenisches*, 58; *Plat. Christ.*, 166; and Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 50.

200. *Plat. Christ.*, 176.

201. See, for example, the *νοῦς* and mirror language in *De Hom. Op.* XII 161C and 164A, and Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις*, 88 and 95-96 on *νοῦς* as activity.

202. See *De Prof. Christ.* (Jaeger, 134): *πᾶν ὅ,τι πέρ ἐστὶν ὑψηλὸν νόημα διὰ τῶν τοιούτων ὀνομάτων δηλούμενον*; but also *De Perfect.* (Jaeger, 183-184), together with Leys, *L'Image*, 93, vs. the notion of the *Imago Trinitatis*.

203. *De Hom. Op.* XI 156AB, and also XVI 184BC.

204. See Chapter II above, 101-103.

in human existence requires cooperation for its realization²⁰⁵. The human being is truly sovereign, or godlike, because we may choose or refuse our own royalty²⁰⁶. Gaïth has elsewhere²⁰⁷ adequately outlined the importance for Gregory of the notion of liberty, and of such terms as προαίρεσις, αὐτεξουσιότης (both of which we have noted in the CD) etc. in relation to that of εἰκὼν/ὁμοίωσις, the burden of which is simply: “the soul becomes that toward which it looks”²⁰⁸.

Before turning to the question of evil and the Fall, we should note an aspect of the εἰκὼν in Gregory that is not unrelated to the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. For Nyssa the image of God is not discovered whole and complete in each individual, human soul, such that the human race would constitute a kind of confederation of images. Instead, he writes that, without loss of personal uniqueness, “all the nature [of man] extending from the first to last is a certain unique image of the truly Existent... the whole [τὸ πᾶν] is called one man”²⁰⁹. The *imago Dei* thus points to the end or goal of deification, to the time when the unity of all in God, in Christ (for Gregory is certainly looking to such texts as Eph 1:23; 2:15; Col 1:15ff), is accomplished, rather than to a pre-existent perfection as in Origen – or, for that matter, Plotinus²¹⁰. The εἰκὼν Θεοῦ belongs properly to the eschaton²¹¹. It is the unity of all in Christ, the “one, new man”, the Church, and thus the same reality that we understand Dionysius to have intended in writing of hierarchy: the variety of the new creation expressed in a single organism that is at once present and still to come²¹².

iii) *Evil and fall*

But Christ did have to come. We still await the “fullness” and are still confronted with struggle here below. On coming to his account of the Fall and the obstacles against which we do battle we touch on what is perhaps Gregory’s most obvious debt to Origen. Like Origen, he is confronted with the fact of evil, the presence of error (πλάνη) that acts through the “senseless passion and bitter pleasure” of the flesh to draw the soul to sin and, finally, to death²¹³. Following the lead established by Basil²¹⁴, and in the general line of late Neoplatonic (Porphyry and Iamblichus) speculation²¹⁵, Gregory understands evil as enjoying no substantial

205. *Vit. Moys.* II.3 (32): ἐκ προαίρεσεως ὁ τοιοῦτος τόκος γίνεται.

206. *De Hom. Op.* IV 136BC.

207. *Liberté*, 76-97.

208. *In Cant.* II (Jaeger, 68).

209. *De Hom. Op.* XVI 185D.

210. See Leys, *L’Image*, 119, and Merki, ‘Ὁμοίωσις, 111 and 136ff, on Gregory’s eschatological dynamism vs. the Neoplatonists.

211. *De Hom. Op.* XVIII 196A.

212. We part company with Daniélou, “Orientations”, 9, in his distinguishing Gregory’s “unitary” vision from Dionysius’ “hierarchism”. The contrast is too sharp. For parallels with Dionysius, see Chapters III, 121-124, 127-130, 158-163 and IV, 191, 218-219 above.

213. *De Inst.* (Jaeger, 40-41).

214. *In Hex.* II.4-5 (PG XXIX, 37D) and *Adv. Eunom.* II.19 612X and 27 636AB.

215. See Daniélou, “Orientations”, 4.

existence outside of the free exercise of the will. It is a perverted “inclination” to which the soul conforms itself in choosing²¹⁶. Just as we find it described in the *DN*²¹⁷, it is a kind of substanceless parasite²¹⁸, an illness (νόσος) not rooted in our nature from the beginning and, as an unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν) activity or motion²¹⁹, destined to vanish entirely²²⁰.

The last, Gregory’s inheritance from Origen of the universal ἀποκατάστασις, is not found in Dionysius – perhaps because the Areopagite does not share (at least to the same extent) the Cappadocian ambivalence toward the flesh, the passions, and embodied nature in general. For Gregory the present nature of the flesh and its accompanying passions (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, etc.) were not original, but were added to our nature through God’s foreknowledge of our misuse of choice²²¹. These are the so-called “coats of skin”, after Genesis 2²²². They include the division of humankind into male and female²²³, and thus marriage is at once the final stage of our entrapment in the flesh, intimately related to our mortality²²⁴, and the providential means whereby God sees to it that we achieve τὸ τῆς φύσεως πλήρωμα, that number constituting the completion of the image that he saw and willed before creation²²⁵. “Adam” in that sense, i.e., humanity as a whole, has not yet come to be (οὐπω ἐγένετο)²²⁶. Origen’s influence is evident, but Gregory has succeeded in transforming the Alexandrian’s myth of the prior creation. It is no longer an actual pre-existence, but instead the plan or intent of God such that, rather than looking backward to a primordial perfection, Gregory directs our vision toward a consummation that has yet to be realized, although it has existed from the “beginning” in the counsels of God. The past ceases to dominate and its place is taken over by the eschatological.

This is not to say that Gregory succeeds in escaping a certain incoherence through his re-casting of the Origenist scheme. If choice is confused because of the clouded circumstances of our present life in the body, how is it that God himself is to be exculpated from creating evil in so clothing us before the Fall? How, moreover, is the original fall of the angels to be explained? These questions are

216. *De Virg.* XII.2 (404ff). Note the use of the expression, θεοειδές (406), as referring to a quality of the soul which has been “obscured” or “rusted” by sin, and our discussion of the term in Dionysius, Chapter II above, 100-101.

217. *DN* IV.16-35 715Dff, esp. IV.31 732C; and Chapter II above, 101-102.

218. For example, *In Eccles.* V 681C: τῇ στερήσει τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρυφίσταται, recalling the παρυπόστασις of *DN* IV 732C.

219. *Ep.* III (Pasquali, 22).

220. *De Hom. Op.* XXI 201BC.

221. See *De Virg.* XII.2 (398-400).

222. *Cat. Orat.* 8 (8).

223. *De Hom. Op.* XXII 205A.

224. *De Virg.* XII.4 (416-420); recall *EH* III 440C-441B and the Fall as expressed in φθαρτικαῖς... γενέσεσιν.

225. *De Hom. Op.* XXII 204CD.

226. *Ibid.*

never satisfactorily answered²²⁷ – a result, according to Otis²²⁸, of fundamentally irreconcilable tensions between Platonic dualism and Biblical creationism. Perhaps, in any case, we might see something of Dionysius' debt to the Nyssene revealed in precisely the lack of attention that the former devotes to these questions in the *CD*

iv) *Christ the center*

If neither Gregory nor, for that matter, Dionysius succeed entirely in replying to the difficulties posed by their correction of Origen, the Nyssene's adjustment does nonetheless place the Incarnation at the center. It is center in at least three senses. First, it is a restoration from the fallen state of error, corruption, darkness and death, a "gathering together" and a liberation²²⁹. Through his Incarnation, death, and Resurrection, the Incarnate Word joins a fragmented and mortal humanity to his own life, unites us both to God and to each other²³⁰. He re-centers his creature in himself. Secondly, in the union of Creator with creature²³¹, humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit²³² and acquires a "center" of infinite depth. We discover in ourselves a "presence" that even now, embedded in matter, space and time, calls for and enables the drawing together of all our faculties up and into an endless ascent. Thus, thirdly, Christ is center because he is himself the meaning and goal of the creation which he has saved and in which now, invisibly, he abides. He is the eschatological center, the hidden presence of the age to come.

v) *The Church, place of the mystery*

This presence is the Church. Let us recall Dionysius' portrait of the Church and our points three through five: the Incarnation is the unique possibility of our participation in God. It embraces the whole of created being. It is the Church, the theandric and eschatological πολιτεία whose hidden presence is discerned and becomes actual by and in the baptized faithful. This is certainly Gregory's understanding. His Church is the mother both instructing her children and feeding them²³³, their true milieu. Through Baptism the believer is joined to this single, living community, the body of Christ, and thus to the purification and salvation that does not come from simple attendance upon teaching, but from the implanting of God's active power, his Spirit²³⁴. Thereby alone can Christians acquire the virtue enabling their own efforts toward the appropriation and knowledge of that

227. See Otis, "Cappadocian Thought", 110-116, and Ladner, "The Philosophical Anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa" *DOP* 12 (1958) 77-89.

228. Otis, *Ibid.* 114; see also *Ep. II* (Pasquali, 16-17).

229. *Cat. Orat.* 15 (63).

230. *Ibid.* 32 (116).

231. *Ibid.* 16 (71-72).

232. *De Inst.* (59).

233. *V. l. Moys.* II.12 (35).

234. *Cat. Orat.* 35-36 (130-140).

power²³⁵. We must be initiated into the mystery since only as participants can we acquire knowledge of it. The Church alone can instruct in the revelation which it both carries, and is.

The association of liturgical action (here particularly Baptism) with true knowledge is not confined to Gregory among the Cappadocians. Basil's defense of the Trinity in his *On the Holy Spirit*²³⁶ features a long and powerful account of the importance of the "unwritten tradition", of the Apostles' doctrines delivered to the Church ἐν μυστηρίῳ, i.e., "under the form of rites and [liturgical] images or habits... the liturgical practice of the Church"²³⁷. The Mystery revealed in the mysteries or sacraments is therefore not only (though most importantly) the transforming power of Christ delivered to us under such forms as – primarily – the Eucharist²³⁸, but is as well a teaching about that divine power, a revelation. Daniélou can thus see Gregory's understanding of the mystical life, deification and ecstasy, not only as parallel to, but as in fact "operated by the sacramental life"²³⁹. It may truly be "conceived of as a 'mystagogy'... a progressive initiation which leads the soul up to the summits"²⁴⁰. He even outlines in the Nyssene an important role for the clergy as exemplars, of the θεομίμητοι and instructors of the faithful²⁴¹. Although Gregory may lack Dionysius' special concentration on the sacraments and on their actions as themselves objects of contemplation – as well as his expanded multivalent notion of εἰκὼν – it is still clear that his system has clear and obvious relevance to the *CD*.

b) Sinai

Of all Dionysius' debts to Gregory of Nyssa surely the latter's interpretation of Moses' ascent up Sinai in the *Life of Moses* is the most obvious. Clearly the basis of the description given in *MT* I.3, it delineates the same stages of ascent. The way up the mountain of the knowledge of God requires first purification²⁴², and then (interpreting Exod 24:15 on the γνῶσις):

...spiritual knowledge occurs first as an illumination in those who experience it.... But as the soul makes progress... so much the more does it see that the divine nature is invisible. It thus leaves all surface appearances, not

235. *De Inst.* (44-45).

236. See Gregory, *Ep.* V (Pasquali, 30-31); Basil, *Ep.* CCXXVI (Loeb, 338) and CCLI (16), and *De Sp. Sanc.* XXVII (Prûche, 478-480).

237. Florovsky, "The Function of Tradition in the Ancient Church", in *Bible, Church, Tradition* (1972) 86-87.

238. For the Eucharist as antidote to corruption and granting participation in God, see *Cat. Orat.* 35 (142-143).

239. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.* 245 (citing *PG* 45, 789BC).

240. *Ibid.* 25 (citing *PG* 44, 330C, 836-837A, and 785C); see also *Ibid.* 217-219, and von Balthasar, *Présence*, 101-107 and 118-121.

241. *Ibid.* 309-314 (citing *PG* 44, 429C, 457B-D, 817B, and 925B).

242. *Vit. Moys.* III.153-155 (77-78).

only those that can be grasped by the senses but also those which the mind itself seems to see, and it keeps on going deeper until... it penetrates the invisible and incomprehensible. The true vision and true knowledge of what we seek consists precisely in not seeing²⁴³.

In the same passage we find the expression “bright darkness”, an insistence on the hierarchic principle – Moses ascends as “one initiated” and on behalf of the people²⁴⁴ – and the “trumpets”, “lights”, and “voices” of the ascent equated with the Gospel proclamation and the intelligible θεωρία of creation²⁴⁵. In short, we find the imagery – though not an exact duplication – of progress in the knowledge of God that is fundamental to the *CD* as we have outlined it, as well as the three stages of ascent basic to Dionysius (and the Alexandrian tradition generally): purification, illumination, and perfection-union.

i) Κάθαρσις

Detail concerning these three levels in Gregory need not concern us here. For our purposes it is enough to take note of two basic features: first, the centrality of Christ and, secondly, the importance of the angelic world. Knowledge of God (γνώσις) in Gregory is equivalent to participation (μετουσία) in him. It is “a mutual compenetration of being”, wherein seeing is possessing²⁴⁶. Christ, who restores the image and so our lost capacity for deification, also binds together the two worlds of created intelligence. He renders us imitators of the angels in so far as we become in him imitators of his own virtues. The first level, κάθαρσις, is the re-ordering and gathering of our natural motion²⁴⁷, such that, rightly concentrated and channeled, it may rise up through created (particularly material) being toward God its source²⁴⁸. The soul becomes thus transformed little by little into light (φωτοειδής), taking on the “form of the dove”, i.e., the Holy Spirit²⁴⁹. In other words, through the exercise (and gift) of purity the soul acquires an increasing transparency to the Word whose will or power is itself the active agent, the true mover²⁵⁰. This process begins in Baptism²⁵¹ and has no end, since the glory so reflected in the “mirror of the soul”²⁵² gives way unceasingly to new revelations of

243. *Ibid.* II.162-163 (81).

244. *Ibid.* II.160 (80).

245. *Ibid.*; see also Gregory of Nazianzus' account of Moses and Sinai, *Theo. Orat.* II.2-3 (22-26), esp. the stress he places on the darkness and its equivalence to τὰ ὀπίσθια of God, the “traces” or εἰκόνες he leaves (cf. Exod 33:23). Recall the *MT* and our discussion above, Chapter IV, 168-177.

246. Gendle, *Apophatic*, 399; see also *In Beat.* IV 269C.

247. In relation to chastity, see *De Virg.* VI.2 (344-348).

248. *Ibid.* XI.3 (384-386), and also *De Inst.* (66-67).

249. *Ibid.* III.8; XI.4 (294-295 and 390-392).

250. *De Inst.* (66-67); see also *Ibid.* (48), via this progress we rise to τὸ νοητὸν ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἄφραστον φῶς.

251. *Vit. Moys.* II.125-126 and 154-155 (67-68 and 78).

252. *In Cant.* III (Jaeger, 86-87 and 90), and *De Beat.* VI 1272BC.

glory²⁵³. By “glory” here Gregory means the form and presence of Christ who thus shows forth himself in us. This is precisely the Dionysian process of θεομίμησις and assimilation (ἁφομοίωσις) we outlined in Chapter II above: an increasing transparency and conformity to God which, like Dionysius, is both dominated by a vocabulary of light²⁵⁴, and conceived of as an imitation, “so far as possible, of the πολιτεία of the angels”²⁵⁵. It is the transformation of matter via God’s Spirit into spirit²⁵⁶, and so the foretaste of the transfigured mode of being following the general Resurrection when human existence is to become ἰσάγγελος²⁵⁷.

ii) *Illumination* - θεωρία

No less a role do the angels play in Gregory’s understanding of the second level of ascent than as the content of the intelligible (νοητός) vision. Recalling Clement’s treatment of the angelic world as the Gnostic πλήρωμα²⁵⁸, to which we would add Origen’s pre-lapsarian cosmos, Daniélou writes that in Gregory, “the νοητά are no longer the Platonic ideas, they are the spiritual persons... to whom the θεωρία corresponds”²⁵⁹. They are the κόσμος νοητός belonging to the heavenly Tabernacle, to which ours has been joined via the Incarnation, which ours reflects, and to which again we are led up in contemplation of the earthly²⁶⁰. The beauty of the νοητά, and the immaterial (ἄϋλος) and intelligible (νοητός) contemplation of which the material is the carrier via Revelation²⁶¹ (primarily for Gregory the Scripture), all refer to the angelic realm. The angels are the first-level justification of spiritual exegesis, allegory²⁶². Contemplating Scripture, or the beauty of the physical creation, one is led up toward perception of the heavenly beings and thus toward the intimation of the spiritual nature of the new creation – its beauty²⁶³ – and a likening to it here below²⁶⁴. On the level of our contemplation this constitutes a certain participation in the divine wisdom, “the supernatural science of God’s plan, the οἰκονομία, the history of the spiritual beings... the sphere of the angels”²⁶⁵. In order to go beyond them one must rise above the θεωρία τῶν ὄντων to the “knowledge” of the divine power itself, the second and ultimate level of allegory (or anagogy): the hidden mystery of the uncreated and the γνόφος²⁶⁶.

253. *De Perf.* (212-214).

254. See Daniélou, “Introduction”, *Glory to Glory* (1961) 23-24.

255. *De Virg.* IV and XIV (Jaeger, 276 and 309).

256. *Cat. Orat.* 33 (125).

257. *In Cant.* (Jaeger, 30); compare *DN I.4* 592BC.

258. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 150.

259. *Ibid.* 171.

260. See *Vit. Moys.* II.178-188 (85-91).

261. See *In Cant.* I (Jaeger, 6); *De Virg.* III.3; XI.4 (*SC* 282 and 386-392).

262. See citations above, and *Vit. Moys.* Pref. (6).

263. See *De Prof.* (*PG* 46, 245CD) and *De Virg.* (*SC* 380ff).

264. *De Virg.* XI.5 (*SC* 392-396).

265. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 150.

266. *Vit. Moys.* II.169 (83).

Borrowing from Daniélou, we wish to draw attention to the two last points relative to the contemplation of created being and of God. The first has to do with the undivided and eschatological nature of the *θεωρία*. The lower Tabernacle reveals and promises the higher (angelic) one as the reality of the future age. Through the *θεωρία* of beings we achieve – are given – an intimation “of the mystery [the Economy] in its nature which is outside of time”. We thus find ourselves, continuing with Daniélou, in fact “very close to the Liturgy which, itself as well, is a representation of the mystery”. Indeed, “liturgical *θεωρία*, Scriptural *θεωρία*, mystical *θεωρία* are ultimately different aspects of a single reality”²⁶⁷. Related to the last, the mystical vision, we arrive at our second point concerning the “Tabernacle” language or, as used by Gregory elsewhere, the imagery of the three heavens (here below, the angels, and God). Quoting Daniélou once more:²⁶⁸ “They are the symbols of the stages of an interior ascension... which brings the soul to distinct, objective worlds but which is not spatially localized”. He adds: “we have in Gregory the same interiorization of the conception of the soul’s return through the cosmic spheres as in Plotinus or in Augustine”. To this list we in our turn add the Areopagite and the multivalent nature of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy; at once an objective reality, an image of the angels and of God, and the symbol of an “interior ascent”²⁶⁹.

iii) *The summits: love, prayer, and the darkness*

Θεωρία marks the limits of our capacity as creatures, but not the end of the ascent. As in Dionysius, there is a power enabling one’s rise to God that pulls him or her above and beyond the frontiers of created being. It is the power of love or desire – *ἔρως* – which Gregory, again like the *CD* after him, identifies with the New Testament *ἀγάπη*²⁷⁰. To take up Daniélou’s “interiorization” once more, this term, together with the *ἐκστασις* to which it is linked, refers to both exterior (objective) and interior (subjective) levels of reality, at once to a natural faculty within humans and to the encounter with the uncreated God²⁷¹. Gregory will thus speak of our desire for the “archetypal beauty” reflected in the “mirror” of the soul’s virtues²⁷², and so of a transformation or transfiguration of the *ἐξωτερικὸν πάθος*²⁷³. Yet that same “fire” or burning of desire which he declares the Lord has

267. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 162-163. It does not seem to us that the distinction between *θεωρία* in Gregory and in Dionysius is as sharp as Roques, “À propos”, 451 note 3, suggests.

268. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 157.

269. See von Ivanka, *Plat. Christ.*, 249: Gregory’s Tabernacle is “eine Antizipation des Grundmotifs der Coelestic und der Ecclesiastica Hierarchia”, and Chapters III and IV above, 155-159 and 219-222 respectively.

270. *Vit. Moys.* II.231-232 (106-107); see Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 201ff, and Gaïth, *Liberté*, 51. Compare above, Chapters I, 66-67 and II, 97-100.

271. *In Cant.* XIII (Jaeger, 383).

272. *De Virg.* XI.3-4 (SC 385-393).

273. *In cant.* I (Jaeger, 27).

come to cast (βαλεῖν) on the world²⁷⁴ he elsewhere²⁷⁵ equates with the signs and gifts of the Holy Spirit working within the soul at prayer. We would see this “divine love [θεῖος ἔρως]”²⁷⁶ as equivalent to the divine ἐνέργειαι that one encounters in ἔκστασις and deification through cooperation with God²⁷⁷. Here again, therefore, although not stated as explicitly as in Dionysius, we appear to find love or ἔρως to be not only the “motor” enabling ἔκστασις but something that is more than merely a created faculty, however ennobled. Instead, revealed within and beneath the purified, natural power, we come to an awareness of the presence and activity within us of God himself “seizing” us²⁷⁸ and carrying us upwards. Such in fact is the proper “term” of the ὁμοίωσις and θεομίμησις as understood by both the Cappadocian and the Areopagite. We place “term” in inverted commas because the process can know no conclusion. It is the increasing share in God’s δύναμις which stretches out toward the infinity of his essence²⁷⁹. Gregory’s emphasis on faith²⁸⁰ and prayer²⁸¹ as the unique milieux of divine-human encounter also recalls the *CD*, both Chapter III of the *DN* and, of course, the whole liturgical context of the corpus as set within the *EH*.

Faith and prayer also point to the γνῶφος, unknowing, and silence crowning the “mountain of the knowledge of God” in the theologies of Gregory and Dionysius²⁸². All created powers, whether of knowing, of vision, or of speech, here are utterly and forever inadequate. We can, with Völker, see certain differences in the treatment of the Sinai motif – particularly in Dionysius’ generally more “abstract” mode of presentation²⁸³. Yet the overall similarities remain clear and overwhelming²⁸⁴. For both writers the “darkness” is at once a super-abundance of light and a sign of God’s inalterable and unattainable transcendence²⁸⁵. For both, there is no knowing this transcendence, no encounter, save through an abandonment in faith and love of all that we are, and a leap – the ἔκστασις – into the dark²⁸⁶. For both – although the correspondence is not perfect – the vision of God is the “term” of the μυσταγωγία, of redeemed humanity’s ascent into the heart of

274. *Ibid.*

275. *De Inst.* (Jaeger, 78ff).

276. *Ibid.* 79-80.

277. *Ibid.* 87; see also *In Cant.* I (Jaeger, 33-34), together with Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 304, and Merki, *Ὁμοίωσις*, 113. See also *De Perf.* (Jaeger, 138) and Basil, *De Sp. Sanc.*, esp. XXVI (Prûche, 472-476).

278. I borrow this from Daniélou, *Les anges*, 126.

279. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 204, citing *Vit. Moys.* 401C and *De Beat.* VII 1280C.

280. *Con. Eunom.* II.91 (253) and *In Cant.* III (Jaeger, 87).

281. *De Inst.* (Jaeger, 78ff).

282. *In Cant.* I (Jaeger, 25); for “silence” see *In Eccles.* VII 732A.

283. *Kontemplation*, 216.

284. Pace Hornus, “Recherches 1955-1960”, 69.

285. Daniélou, *Théol. Myst.*, 194.

286. *In cant.* I and XI (Jaeger, 25 and 324); *De Virg.* X (SC 290); and *Vit. Moys.* II.163-164 (SC 81-82).

the μυστήριον who is Christ – and so another and true beginning of the guided ascent up and into infinity. All comes together on Sinai's peak: interior and exterior, subjective and objective, the world, the angels, the soul and the Church, all are joined, become one, in Christ and so in God.

Summary: We maintain that in correcting Origen, Gregory of Nyssa established the lines of much of Dionysius' theology. Both follow first of all the themes of transcendence/immanence already stated forcefully by Basil²⁸⁷. Emphasis is thus shifted away from the αἰσθητά/νοητά divide to that between created/uncreated. The νοητά refer then either to the δυνάμεις of God or to the created κόσμος νοητός of the angels. The latter become the object of θεωρία, and the model of the Kingdom to come in whose polity we are ultimately to share. In no way, however, do these created νοητά serve to bridge the gulf between God and world, which remains absolute. There is no continuity, but there is communication – by grace. An important direction with regard to Dionysius that Gregory takes to develop this fundamental correction is his treatment of motion (κίνησις), ἔρως, and ἔκστασις. As opposed to Origen (with some qualification), motion is for Gregory the basic characteristic of created being which, though finite, is by nature impelled to communion with the infinite God. The impelling force is that of love/desire, at once a natural faculty and the grace of God in us. The term is ἔκστασις or – here, too, opposed to Origen – rather a continuous departure from the limits of self and of created being generally. Also, by placing his new creation and continuing ἐπέκτασις at the end of time, Gregory succeeds in shifting his vision's center of gravity away from Origen's myth of the "beginnings", away, too, from the "steady-state" of a Plotinus, to an eschatological bias, to a drawing up toward the end and transformation of all in Christ. Christ becomes, indeed, not simply a "moment" in the process of "return", but, as we noted, at all times the absolute center that pulls up all into itself.

The Origenist use of what came to be the πρόοδος - ἐπιστροφή cycle of late Neoplatonism, i.e., the identification of the former with the Fall and the latter with Providence, has thus also been altered by Gregory in ways significant for the *CD*. The "procession" is no longer evil. Rather, we should place it in the "powers" or will of the Creator, as his intentions with regard to creation. It becomes the "out-going" of his creative activities which at the same time carry within themselves the "shape", as it were, of the end. That same "shape" has been inaugurated now in Christ, in whom we may already begin to recognize and appropriate the accomplishment of our "return".

We believe, then, that these changes or alterations of Origen – and of Plotinus – were all of fundamental importance for Dionysius and the shape of the *CD*. Our concern with Origen and the Origenists, however, is not yet quite complete. Gregory has, as we have noted, provided Dionysius with certain

287. See Pera, "Denys le Mystique", 43-44.

essential contributions to the latter's notion of εἰκών, and so the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, but not enough entirely to explain certain details of that notion. For much of that detail, for the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy as image of creation and of creation as bearing γνῶσις, as a divinely-ordained τάξις bearing the "science" of God's will, we must turn to one whose contributions to the *Areopagitica* have been too long neglected.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EGYPTIAN DESERT: THE DESERT FATHERS AND EVAGRIUS OF PONTUS

A. THE EARLY MONKS

The Egyptian desert at the end of the third century and beginning of the fourth was the scene of one of the great revolutions in the history of the Christian Church, the monastic movement. Within a century the face of the Church and of Christianity had been profoundly and permanently altered, and Dionysius is as much the heir of this momentous shift as he is of the rest of the tradition. Before turning to our discussion of the most remarkable monastic thinker of this period we would therefore like to offer a sketch of certain points in two of the most important literary products of early monasticism, the *Life of Antony* traditionally ascribed to Athanasius¹, and the *Sayings of the Fathers* or *Gerontikon*².

1. The Vita Antonii

Two specific passages in Antony's *Life* represent possible points of contact with the *CD*, and the whole picture of the ascetic saint that emerges from the *Life* yet a third. Early in his struggles the saint suffers a series of particularly fierce assaults from the demons. Pushed near despair, he cries out to God for help. His cry, the biographer tells us, is answered when, "suddenly [ἐξαίφνης]", the roof of the tomb he is inhabiting "opens" and he is surrounded by heavenly light. The light carries the presence of Christ who expells the demons and comforts the ascetic³. This account clearly recalls the *CD*'s third epistle. Perhaps even more so, it bears

1. PG XXVI 837A-976B (English, *NPNF* IV, 2d series, 195-221). For recent doubts about Athanasius' authorship and the possibility of a prior Coptic *Life*, under Syrian influence, see T. D. Barnes, "Angel of Light or Mystic Initiate? The Problem of the Life of Antony" *JTS* 37 (1986) 353-368.

2. Greek text of *Apophthegmata Patrum*, PG LXV 72A-440D (English, *The Desert Christian*, ed. and trans. B. Ward [Kalamazoo: 1980]).

3. *Life* 10 (860A).

a striking resemblance to Carpus' vision in *Epistle VIII*⁴ where we also find the "sudden" (here ἄφνω) opening of the roof and vision of Christ in light. But in the latter case it is a bishop who receives the visitation, and Dionysius tells the story in order to admonish a not very holy monk.

Our second episode comes after Antony has retreated to a deserted fort in the far desert. After twenty years in solitude and isolation, unseen by others, impatient believers break down the doors of the holy man's retreat. He emerges, says his biographer, "like an initiate and God-bearer from a kind of sanctuary", and immediately begins a ministry characterized by healings, clairvoyance, and wise counsel as the "physician of all Egypt"⁵.

This brings us to our third point. Antony is pictured as the true Spirit-bearer, a man of God clothed with the authority of an Old Testament prophet, and thus as a primary witness to humanity redeemed and transfigured in Christ⁶. He is, indeed, the successor to the Ignatian martyr, a kind of epiphany of the new creation and, thus, of the Church. As we shall see, finally, this new type or icon of the perfected Christian would pose a threat to established church order and authority in – perhaps especially – Dionysius' probable homeland, Syria. Athanasius (if that is the biographer) is, however, quite careful to show that the great ascetic revered the clergy⁷, and even how he had gone, at the Archbishop's request, to Alexandria to testify against the Arians⁸. This reverence toward the popularly received (and often undoubted) sanctity of the ascetics, and simultaneous care to forestall their potentially disruptive effects bear important affinities to Dionysius' handling of the monks' place in the hierarchy, particularly in *EH VI* and *Epistle VIII*.

2. The Sayings of the Fathers

We find a similar combination in the other great source book of the early monastic movement, *The Sayings of the Fathers*. There is no evident plan to this collection, though editing doubtless did take place⁹. The words, λόγια, of the elders are presented in apparently artless, alphabetical sequence. Nonetheless, conflicts with church authorities, for example, still do appear, as well as questions

4. 1100A (190:5ff).

5. *Life* 14 (865C) for the emergence and beginning of the healings; 57 (925B), 60 (929AB), 66 (937AB), and 86 (964AB) for the clairvoyance; and 87 (965A) for *tatros* of Egypt.

6. He is the "ἄνθρωπος Θεοῦ", *Life* 70 (941B), recalling OT figures like Elijah, etc. See, for example, P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church* (Oxford: 1978) esp. 18-67, for the theme of the prophet.

7. *Life* 67 (937C).

8. *Life* 68-69 (940B-941B).

9. See for example G. Bunge, "Évagre le pontique et les deux Macaires" *Ir* 56:2-3 (1983) 215-227 and 323-360, for Evagrius' relationship to one of the giants of the early desert, Macarius the Great, and the former's subsequent near disappearance from the collection in the wake of the early Origenist controversies, esp. 352 and 355-56.

over the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist. Perhaps the most important conflict, though its target is unstated, occurs over exactly the question that sets the stage for Dionysius' letter to Demophilus: the reconciliation of penitent sinners. In at least three stories in the collection, the prevailing system of rigorous penances set up by the clergy of the day is overruled by the inspired word of one of the elders¹⁰. This, as it turns out, was but the opening salvo of a centuries long debate in the Greek (and non-Greek) East over the relative places of charismatic and institutional authority, a debate within which both the *Sayings* and the *CD* represent different episodes¹¹.

The second issue of possible relevance to the *CD* concerns, as noted, the Eucharist. A certain brother in Scete is troubled by the thought that the Eucharist is merely a "symbol". He is counseled by three elders not to believe this and advised to pray on it. He does, and is rewarded by the vision of an angel pouring the Christ child's blood into the chalice at the time of the consecration¹². A second monk wonders if his priest is worthy to celebrate the Eucharist. He is given heaven's reply on receiving the vision of an angel descending at the liturgy's beginning in order to clothe the celebrant in a robe of radiant light¹³. The priest's deficiencies are covered over by divine grace in order to assure the sacrament's efficacy. The angelic concelebration, in both visions, is also an interesting parallel to the *CD*. Questions over the necessity and "real presence" of the sacraments, as well as over the worthiness of those in holy orders, point to the existence of a revolt against – or at least indifference to – the importance of the hierarchy, and must therefore have been of concern to Dionysius, particularly given the Messalian controversy (on which more below) concentrated in – though not limited to – Syria. On the other hand, the Areopagite seems to share a number of the monks' views, for example on the illumining power of the Eucharist¹⁴, or his opinion, in agreement with Demophilus, that the unillumined priest (ἀφώτιστος ἱερεὺς) is no priest.¹⁵ Nonetheless, and in the same breath, he still insists that Demophilus obey the person in orders, whether worthy or not.

A third area of interest for us, as in the *Vita Antonii*, is the image of the ascetic fathers as Spirit-bearers. The *Sayings* are, at any rate in appearance, quite

10. See Lot 2 (*PG* LXV 256AB, Ward 122), Sisoës 20 (400AB, 217), and especially Poemen 12 (325AB, 169). For an analysis of the fourth-century issue, see H. Dörries, "The Place of Confession in Ancient Monasticism" *SP* 5 (1962) 284-311, esp. 291-297.

11. For a review of the sources from the fourth- through fourteenth-centuries in the Greek East, see the still valuable study by K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum* (Leipzig: 1898) esp. 225-330. For the Syrian equivalent, starting even earlier, see our remarks opening Chapter IX below.

12. Daniel 7 (156D-160A, 53-54).

13. Mark the Egyptian 1 (304A-C, 151).

14. See Isaac the Theban 2 (241AB, 110) and compare with *EH* III.1 and Dionysius' illumination.

15. 1092C (181:7-10). Compare with Abba Matoes' unwillingness ever to celebrate the liturgy because of his unworthiness, Matoes 9 (292C-293A, 144).

innocent of Clement of Alexandria's or an Origen's philosophical concerns and sophistication. Nonetheless, what we find in them seems precisely to be Clement's gnostic and Origen's διδάσκαλος incarnated in living men. The temple language, our point seven, is not specifically used, but roughly the same idea seems to be present. Clement had spoken above of the gnostic as temple and invested with Christ's splendor. In the *Sayings* we find the elders both beholding and radiating the divine δόξα. Arsenius insists on the possibility of seeing God, citing John 14:21, and one of the fathers sees the old man wrapped in heavenly flame¹⁶. Abba Silvanus has to break off his contemplation of the glory in order to speak with a visitor, and later is seen reflecting it like Moses in Exodus 34¹⁷. Abba Sisoës dies in its radiance and Abba Joseph's hands are transformed into fire before the startled Abba Lot¹⁸. The message is clear, and it is the same one that we found in the *Vita Antonii*: here is the fulness of Christianity, the transfigured human being of the age to come. The hierarchy and – but only passively – the monk of the *EH*, Moses' ascent in the *MT*, together with Dionysius' ἑξαίφνης and his mention of the Transfiguration in *DNI.4*, all surely fit into this context. In between Dionysius and the earliest monks, however, stands a figure in whom these themes were given their first systematic articulation.

B. EVAGRIUS PONTICUS

Evagrius was an anchorite, a sometime protégé of Gregory of Nazianzus, an early inheritor and perhaps the greatest theoretician of monastic spirituality. He is not often associated with Dionysius save via Maximus the Confessor who, it is felt¹⁹, took from both the – previously unrelated – theologians in order to produce his own, original synthesis. We, on the other hand, have already stated that Dionysius anticipates Maximus to a degree hitherto (with the possible exception of a Lossky) unrecognized, and we make it our contention here that this anticipation extends to a relation between Evagrian thought and the *Areopagitica*.

Evagrius' system is at once a narrowing and a clarification of Origen's²⁰. It is

16. Arsenius 10 (89C, 10) for the citation, and 27 (96BC, 13) for the vision.

17. Silvanus 3 and 12 (409A and 412C, 223-224).

18. Sisoës 14 (396BC, 223); Joseph of Panephysis 7 (229CD, 103).

19. See von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, 35-45; Dalmais, "Saint Maximus le Confesseur et la crise de l'Origénisme monastique" *TVM*, 411-421, and "L'héritage évagrien dans la synthèse de Saint Maxime" *SP VIII* (1966) 356-362; Viller, "Aux sources de la spiritualité de Saint Maxime" *RAM* 11 (1930) 156-184 and 239-268; Hausherr, "Contemplation chez les anciens Grecs et autres orientaux chrétiens" *DSp* 2.1762-1782, and "Les Grands Courants de la Spiritualité Orientale" *OCP* 1 (1935) 114-138; Bornert, *Les Commentaires Byzantins de la Divine Liturgie*, 85; and vs. Lossky, Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 177-178. The latter, however, in an extended footnote (*Ibid.* note 1, 124-128), has anticipated much of our own argument. Hausherr as well, in a later article ("Pierre l'Ibérien" *OCP* 19 [1953] 247-260), has contributed to our position in favor of an Evagrian link with the *CD*.

20. So sharply so, indeed, that following A. Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica d'Évagre le Pontique* (1962), there now appears to be little doubt that the "Origen" condemned in 553

a clarification that leads him to a further radicalization of the earlier thinker. Accepting the outlines of Origen's scheme, he is interested in how Providence is realized in the soul. He wonders just what the stages of return are and how they are to be effected in practice, how the *voûs* is to profit from the pedagogy of the sensible (and angelic) world and what the powers are, together with their proper use, that are given it for the appropriation of those lessons. He is of interest to us with regard both to his presentation and adjustments of Origen's grand plan of Providence, and to his analysis of the soul's ascent.

1. An outline of the system

a) God

Evagrius is both heir and subscriber to the results of the fourth-century's debates concerning the Trinity. He accepts and defends the Cappadocian triad of co-eternal and co-equal Persons²¹. He also, particularly in the *Gnostic Centuries*²², appears occasionally to refer to the Cappadocian distinction between God's unknowable essence or nature and the energies, which he chooses to call the Divine Wisdom (*σοφία*)²³. Nevertheless, while the Trinity is clearly exalted above all created intelligences, it "alone being uniquely essential science [*γνώσις οὐσιώδης*]"²⁴, the intellectualist flavor of the latter phrase appears to some critics to point to a God more along the lines of Origen than the Cappadocians, more "an utterly simple Monad"²⁵ than the Three ineffably united. This is not to deny an apophatic element in Evagrius' thought that we, following Gendle²⁶, feel to have been hitherto overlooked, and for which he certainly owed more to Cappadocia than to Origen.

was in fact the Alexandrian as filtered through the mind of his disciple. See, however, G. Bunge, "Origenismus-Gnostizismus: zum geistes-geschichtlichen Standort des Evagrius Pontikos" *VC* 40 (1986) 24-54 for some qualifications of Guillaumont's picture of Evagrius' Origenism, and a defense of his trinitarian orthodoxy against a generation of gnostics still active in Egypt. See also the same, "Hénade ou monade" au sujet des deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne" *LM* 102 (1989) 69-91, esp. 89-90 for later changes in Evagrius' thought.

21. See R. Melcher, *Der achte Brief des Basilios, ein werk des Evagrius Ponticus* (1923).

22. We shall be referring throughout to the edition and translation of the Syriac text by A. Guillaumont, *Les Six Centuries des Kephalaia Gnostica d'Évagre le Pontique* [henceforth *KG*], *Patrologie Orientalis* XXVIII (1958), and without exception to the second text, "S2", which Guillaumont has established as bearer of the authentic Evagrius.

23. See esp. *KG* V.51; also I.71; II.21; III.82, and, for comment, Gendle, *Apophatic*, 410-411.

24. *KG* I.89; also II.47 and I.3.

25. Gendle, 422; compare Origen, *First Princ.* I.1.6 (21:7-9). But see G. Bunge again for a vigorous defense of Evagrius' trinitarian orthodoxy. "On the Trinitarian Mysticism of Evagrius Ponticus" *MonS* 17 (1986) 191-208, as well as the two articles cited just above, "Hénade ou monade?" and "Origenismus-Gnostizismus".

26. *Ibid.* 410ff.

b) The Πρωτα: motion and fall:

i) *The νόες*

Evagrius' real world, or true creation as Origen's, is constituted by the primordial unity, or *henad*²⁷, of minds (νόες)²⁸ created by God before time and multiplicity²⁹ to enjoy union in the repose of the Trinity's essential science³⁰. It might be noted that Evagrius writes of the minds' "susceptibility" or "receptivity" to the "essential knowledge" of the Trinity³¹ rather than of a union or power of union that is natural to them. They have no, as it were, "right" to God, only the capacity to open themselves to his grace³². We would therefore be well advised not to overstress the intellectualism of the term, νοῦς, since what Evagrius appears to be suggesting with it is less the reasoning or discursive function of human intelligence than the latter's openness to intuition and ultimately to God. Indeed, we are here perhaps not so very far from Nyssa or the Areopagite.

ii) *Κίνησις*

The very openness of the νόες, their receptivity, implies as well that they, not being essentially knowledge, may choose to close themselves to it and so "move" necessarily into ignorance. This is of course precisely Origen's doctrine of the Fall as the aboriginal separation of motion (κίνησις) from the primordial repose (στάσις) of contemplation³³, their πρόοδος into multiplicity and the break-up of the *henad*. More clearly still than in Origen, motion is for Evagrius the original sin, the illegitimate assertion of the creature's will over and against the Creator³⁴. We must add, however, that it also has another aspect, and another development of Origen. If it is the cause of our present multiplicity and the reason for our embodiment – even to the addition of emotion (θυμός) and desire (ἐπιθυμία) to our original simplicity³⁵ – it is also the way up and back to unity. The triad of the Fall we applied to Origen, στάσις - κίνησις - γένεσις, is succeeded by a second: γένεσις - κίνησις - στάσις³⁶. The genesis of embodied existence, our

27. See Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 72-76; and *First Princ.* II.1.1 (107:1-5). But for Evagrius' likely use of the word μονάς (monad), see G. Bunge, "Hénade ou monade", esp. the close analysis of the Syriac terms, 72-86. The term ἕνας, though does seem to have crept into Evagrian texts later as part of a continuing Origenism, in Palestine especially, 89-90.

28. *KG* I.9.

29. *KG* VI.9; III.24; and I.8.

30. *KG* III.30; III.6; IV.77; and *De Orat.* 14-20 and esp. 84 (*PG* 79, 1169D-1172B and 1184B).

31. For example, *KG* IV.77.

32. See Gendle, 412; and D. B. Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium* (1970), 91-92.

33. *KG* VI.9 and III.22.

34. *KG* I.63.

35. *KG* VI.85.

36. For a discussion of these triads, see Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 92-96.

present universe, is in order to structure and direct motion, to concentrate and rarify it, in order to make of it the way of our return (ἐπιστροφή). As in the *CD* (and Nyssa), salvation is for Evagrius a matter of the refinement and perfection of movement.

c) The Δεύτερα and the Demiurge

The present world is therefore, as in the *Peri Archon*, a temporary affair, the expression at once of God's judgment³⁷ and of his Providence³⁸. In a striking departure from Origen, however, it is not the Logos himself who is the architect of the δεύτερα, the providential ordering of fallen minds which is our world. Forbidden a Logos who is mediator by essence because of the Nicene ὁμοούσιος, Evagrius gives this mediatory – and necessarily inferior³⁹ – role instead to Jesus Christ⁴⁰. Christ, following Origen, is not himself God, but rather the one νοῦς who has remained united to the Word⁴¹. As opposed, then, to God's "first science" in fashioning the πρῶτα, Christ has formed the "nature of bodies and of worlds" in accordance with the "contemplation" or "science" of the δεύτερα⁴².

The function of this embodied world and our contemplation of it is to lead to the "first science", and so to God. It supplies, in other words, the foundation and possibility of the ἀναγωγή. As Evagrius tells us, the world which is "la sustasis naturelle qui comprend les corps differents et varies des *logikoi*" has been constructed entirely "pour la science de Dieu"⁴³. More explicitly than in Origen, the providential creation presents the fallen intelligence with a ladder of levels of knowledge⁴⁴, where each level opens onto the one above it as soon as its proper contemplation has been achieved⁴⁵, and whose culmination is final restoration to the original repose⁴⁶. The last awaits the end of time since each level or rung of the ladder corresponds to a certain kind of body and world⁴⁷. This is, again, Origen's

37. *KG* III.36.

38. *KG* VI.60 and 43.

39. See Refoulé, "La Christologie d'Évagre et l'Origénisme" *OCP* (1961) 255.

40. *KG* IV.59.

41. *KG* VI.14.

42. *KG* III.26. The language of δεύτερα and of πρῶτα strikes a note that we have heard in the *CD*. It may then be of interest and significance that Evagrius' Syrian commentators seem to have, at the least, anticipated Dionysius' use of these terms (and his adaptation of Evagrius). Thus see R. Beulay, *La lumière sans forme: Introduction à l'étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale* (Chevetogne: 1987) esp. 30. "La version syriaque commune des Centuries a amendé ces théories, éliminant celle des deux créations, mais conservant la distinction entre les êtres premiers et êtres seconds (qui sera interprétée par les nestoriens non plus dans un sens chronologiques, mais dans un sens hiérarchique...)". Or could this adjustment be not an anticipation of Dionysius, but a result of his influence?

43. *KG* III.36.

44. *KG* I.70 for example.

45. *KG* II.67.

46. *KG* II.62.

47. *KG* IV.43; and see Guillaumont, "Évagre" *DSp* 4:1740.

ἀποκατάστασις, the vision of world-cycles spiraling over aeons back up and into the intelligible center, the “beginning”. Like Origen, indeed, but we would still do well to mention two points concerning, first, Christ, and second, the levels of being, that are of significance to Dionysius and particularly accented in Evagrius.

i) *Christ*

Jesus occupies, as maker and pedagogue, the center of our own level and of all the levels of the δεύτερα. He is both their demiurge and their meaning. He, who is not the Logos but instead the “first-born” of νόες and joined by the “unction” of unity with the Word⁴⁸, has “traced” his wisdom in the nature of corporeal being⁴⁹. He is himself the lesson the secondary worlds have been created to impart. In so far as they appropriate this lesson to themselves, the *logikoi* realize Christ in themselves and so ascend the ladder. The historical Incarnation is therefore, as in Origen, to be placed within this pattern of universal instruction. It is iconic, and the incarnate Lord finally another lesson presenting us with a paradigm for imitation here below, and in his own person revealing the true “doctrine”⁵⁰ of our nature: its ultimate equality with the νοῦς, Jesus Christ⁵¹.

Evagrius does, though, work a definite development of Origen here. In giving Christ the role of demiurge he not only gets around the difficulties Nicean orthodoxy presents to a strict Origenism, but as well makes the Incarnation itself far more of a piece with the overall pattern of pedagogy, as well as the latter’s evident focal point. Christ is author and sense of both the Scriptures and the worlds. He is the mystagogue and summit of the levels of being and contemplation for which he has prepared us, and which he has himself, in himself, revealed in history. He is the action of God’s Providence as shaping and directing in time. The picture of the Savior must appear as closely conforming to Dionysius’ Jesus, head and maker and sense of the hierarchies, mystery and mystagogue⁵². The differences are equally important. For Dionysius Jesus is also our τέλος. His mystery is the presence of God in our world and not merely of the “beginning”. Προόδος and Providence are not, in the *CD*, associated strictly with the Fall and its remedying. Dionysius does not therefore require the services of a lesser, and temporary, intermediary. Jesus, for him, is permanent.

48. See *KG* IV.20, and, for the “chrism” of the “science of unity”, IV.18 and 21. We might recall “Jesus our unction” and the importance accorded the consecration of the chrism in *EH* IV.

49. *KG* III.57.

50. See *Évagre le Pontique: Traité Pratique ou le Moine*, trans. and crit. text with intro. by Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, *SC* 170-171 (1971) Vol. II, 498.

51. *KG* VI.89.

52. See D. B. Evans, “Leontius of Byzantium and Dionysius” *EB* 7 (1980) 1-34 for a suggested connection between Palestinian Evagrianism and Dionysius, 28ff.

ii) *Temporary but functional hierarchies*

Evagrius provides us with a completely traditional spectrum of reason-endowed beings ranging from the angelic hosts, through humankind, and down to the legions of hell. The doctrine of original and final equality rules out, however, any notion of permanent diversity. The Providence of Christ is provisional, and so are the structures he has created for our edification. Abolition of the hierarchies rather than their transfiguration is the Evagrian gospel. They are the reflection of states of being rather than of abiding differences in essence⁵³. His τάξεις, the ranks and distinctions proper to the secondary world, are therefore purely functional⁵⁴. They do not reveal the original will or intentions of God with regard to each – i.e., the creative λόγοι – as they do in Dionysius, but instead teach the temporary, pedagogic intent of Christ's Providence. They are to be ascended, also not Dionysius, as steps on the way back to the original γνώσις, but not as themselves bearing that ultimate science.

iia) The angels

Nonetheless, however temporary and functional they are, and thus distinguished from the hierarchies of the *CD*, the effect – indeed, precisely the function – of Evagrius' τάξεις here below remains markedly similar to that of their Dionysian equivalent. This is particularly clear with regard to the role he gives the angelic orders. The latter stand on the highest rungs of the world-ladder. Their τάξεις being functional, they are not possessed of a nature essentially higher than humanity's. They are also νόες, less fallen than we but still not yet perfected⁵⁵. But they are higher now. They feed continually on the τροφή of knowledge and participate more fully than we in the providential work of Christ, in his saving love. Their intervention on behalf of the (more) fallen is far more complete than any set of human actions could be:

...[les anges] instruisent certains hommes par la parole; ils en ramènent d'autres au moyen des songes, ils en rendent d'autres chastes par les terreurs nocturnes, et ils font revenir des autres à la vertu par les coups⁵⁶.

They are in short the guides (ὁδηγοῦσιν) of the just⁵⁷.

It is no accident that the higher levels of Evagrius' secondary cosmos should be yet more involved in the struggle toward ascent of the lower orders than the inhabitants themselves of those regions. His Christ, we recall, is fundamentally the

53. See, for example, *KG* V.47.

54. Recall Origen, *In Jn.* 2.33 (304); see also Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia*, 106.

55. See Hausherr, *Leçons d'un Contemplatif* (1960) 48-49, in comment upon *De Orat.* 30 1173B, and *KG* VI.2.

56. *KG* VI.86; recall Chapter III above, 145-147.

57. *Monks' Mirror* 23, ed. Gressman, *TU* 39, 4B (1913) 155.

Pedagogue, the instructor both through creative act, the making of the δεύτερον, and personal example, the revelation of the providential order and modes of ascent given us in his Incarnation⁵⁸. It follows that the angels should of necessity share more fully than we in Jesus' providential work⁵⁹. It is the same rule at work of increasing assimilation to God in contemplation producing naturally greater assimilation to him in providential love – γνῶσις and θεομίμησις or ἐπιστήμη and ἐνέργεια – that we found in the *CD*⁶⁰. It is Christ who created the sensible and impressed upon it the forms of the intelligible for the sake of edification, who has judged the νόες and framed the worlds in light of that judgment (κρίσις), and who is thus here reflected in the angels' τάξις: "L'ange est l'essence raisonnable à qui ont été confié les logoi qui concernent la providence et le jugement et ceux des mondes des hommes"⁶¹. If Christ's judgment includes the whole of the world-cycles and his Providence the healing and restoration of the just, the judgment of the angels "est la science concernant les maladies de l'âme, qui fait monter à la santé ceux qui ont été blessés"⁶². If Christ's Providence saw to the endowing of certain νόες with soul and body, with ἐπιθυμία and θυμός, it is the task of the angels, i.e., that providence pertaining particularly to them, to see to the proper operation of these faculties in humans in order that they may ascend up and back to knowledge. Evagrius' angels fulfill then the same functions as those of Dionysius. They are not themselves creators or demiurges, but they both reflect and assist Christ, the true demiurge, and his Providence through purifying, illumining, and perfecting:

Par les intellections de l'exhortation les anges saints nous purifient de la malice at nous rendent impassibles, par celles de la nature et par les *logoi* divins, ils nous libèrent de l'ignorance et nous rendent sages et gnostiques⁶³.

As in the *CD*, the angels are for Evagrius guides and intermediaries. They act as vehicles of revelation and instruments of Providence through aiding in our ἀναγωγή.

ii) Evagrius' audience: the monks

What then do we learn of the beneficiaries of the angels' providence, the orders of men? Evagrius has very little to say concerning the structures of the Church – indeed, very little at all about the Church, or its sacraments, aside from an occasional "honorable mention"⁶⁴. It is of course true that he is a monk writing

58. See Evans' remarks, *Leontius*, esp. 40-41 and 95.

59. See esp. *KG* VI.76.

60. See above, Chapters II, 100-105, and III, 137-141.

61. *KG* V.7; see also in Chapter III, 145-157, on the angels' hierarchy.

62. *KG* III.46.

63. *KG* IV.25; and see again Chapter III above, 145-147.

64. For example, *Pratique* 100 (vol. II, 710): τοὺς ἱερεῖς ἀγαπητέον μετὰ τὸν Κύριον.

for monks and consequently that such matters as ecclesiology, liturgy, and sacraments might well not play an important part in his works. While arguments from silence are dangerous, it still appears to us that Evagrius' general neglect of these matters is too much of a piece with his overall vision not to be overlooked completely. The "centrifugal tendency we have already noted in Origen's exaltation of the διδάσκαλος above the sacramental hierarchy of the Church, over bishops and clergy, has been if anything intensified in the thoughts of his disciple. The Alexandrian's "hierarchy" was already distinctly monkish⁶⁵, and Evagrius appears simply to have drawn the, for him, logical conclusion. Hausherr's remarks on Evagrius' use of the term πρεσβύτερος in *De Orat.* 77-78 are illuminating in this context: the term "doit être... pris au sens spirituel: on devient prêtre... 'plus ancien' par une vertu plus grande et une contemplation plus haute"⁶⁶. Priest for Evagrius, he concludes, means theologian, and theologian means in turn, so far as we understand him, monk, specifically the anchorites whom Evagrius intends as his main readers⁶⁷. The monk is beyond the struggle with things (πράγματα), the material world. He battles instead with thoughts (λογισμοί) and has therefore the potential to look beyond the veil of the secondary to the primary and original shape of creation, to grasp the mind of Providence, of Christ, and so ascend to God. Then, too, the monk as the one who is alone (μόνος - μοναχός) reflects that basic direction in Evagrius' thinking which, in so stressing the intelligible, is bound to see the Christian life as the ultimately lonely communion of mind with Mind. Finally, if the monk is the Christian par excellence, his must therefore be the real authority for Christians. He is the true hierarchy. We shall return to this point and its obvious relevance for the *CD* at the conclusion of this section.

2. The return (ἐπιστροφή) and the appropriation of Providence

Evagrius outlines the return as taking place in three stages: the πρακτική, φυσική θεωρία, and the γνωστική which roughly parallel the Dionysian triad of purification, illumination, and perfection. They constitute respectively: the battle against the passions, the contemplation of creation, and the γνῶσις or ἔνωσις of "essential science". The movement is one of ascent through levels of contemplation with first a concentration of intellectual powers, and then the movement up and through the worlds, visible and invisible, of creation to the uncreated.

a) The πρακτική or κάθαρσις

Dionysius has relatively little to say concerning the details of purification. What there is of it in the *CD* however, particularly concerning ἀπάθεια and love, does show affinities with – we would say the influence of – Evagrius. Therefore we turn, briefly, to the struggle.

65. See Crouzel, "Origène le précurseur du monachisme".

66. Hausherr, *Leçons*, 109-110.

67. Guillaumont, "Introduction", *Pratique*, 48.

The πρακτική has nothing to do with “active life” in the world.⁶⁸ It is the struggle of the contemplative monk seeking to win through to “pure prayer” by first mastering the unruly and finally illusory demands of his body and soul. This is his “work”, adumbrated by Adam’s need following the Fall to earn his bread through toil⁶⁹. It is also the first step toward true knowledge beginning, as true knowledge should, with that knowledge of the self which the virtues, as the proper ordering of the soul’s motions, require. It is thus a genuine inquiry into the structures which constitute the stuff of our present mode of being and thus of our present world itself:

Qui connaîtra la sustasis du monde et l’activité des éléments? Ou bien, qui scrutera comment celui-ci a été joint à celui-là, quels sont leur empire et leur participation l’un à l’autre, en sorte que la *praktiké* devient un char pour l’âme raisonnable qui s’applique à la science du Dieu⁷⁰.

The aim is always then directed toward the principles of the vices, the λογισμοί, and their attendant demons⁷¹. The real battle is always joined on the level of the intelligible world – and battle it truly is. One is required to become a master of the strategy and a general of the unseen warfare, arriving finally with the aid of Christ and his grace – a most important point for Evagrius⁷² – at a real understanding of the opposing spiritual forces, τοὺς λόγους τούτων⁷³. This is indeed the providential aspect of embodiment: the νοῦς cannot re-enter the bodiless state without first having corrected itself⁷⁴, and it is through the process of correction that it receives the initiation necessary for its re-entry into the world of the νοητοί⁷⁵. Initiation, indeed, for we recall here Dionysius’ entry of the catechumen into the body of the Church through Baptism, first step of the mystagogy. We shall return later to these parallels, man-world for Evagrius and man-Church for Dionysius.

For now, the struggle for the virtues concludes with ἀπάθεια and ἀγάπη. This

68. *Ibid.* 106-107.

69. *Pratique* 89 (689).

70. *KG* I.67. For an appreciation of the lucidity and realism of Evagrius’ analyses, see J. E. Bamberger, “Introduction”, *The Praktikos and Chapters on Prayer* (1970) esp. lxxviii-lxxix, where he also points out that Evagrius, in this regard at least, is not so far from the Desert Tradition as has been maintained by some – for example, Bacht, “Pachomius” *TVM*, 65, and Hausherr, “Grands Courants”, 122. Bunge, “Évagre et les deux Macaires”, has also underlined the continuity with the Desert Fathers in Evagrius’ spiritual direction. See also his *Geistliche Vaterschaft: Christliche Gnosis bei Evagrius Pontikos* (Regensburg: 1988).

71. See Guillaumont, “Introduction”, 60-61, as well as his article, “Évagre” *DSp* 4.1734. Recall, too, the “principles” of the rites to which the hierarch attends, Chapter IV above, 174.

72. *Pratique* 14 (532-535), and *Monks’ Mirror* 62; see also Hausherr, *Leçons*, 150-153.

73. *Ibid.* 60 (614-617).

74. *Ibid.* 61 (642-643).

75. See Guillaumont, “Introduction”, *Ibid.* 106-107. Note also the role given to the sacraments in the process of κάθαρσις, *Ibid.* 100 (710-711).

may be defined as the harmonious and measured working of our present *οὐσία* (mode of being) under the guiding sovereignty of our reason. Evagrius summarizes the condition in his description of “justice [*δικαιοσύνη*]” as the virtue effecting and ordering the “symphony and harmony of the parts of the soul”⁷⁶. Ἀπάθεια does not, perhaps, mean the cessation of passionate thoughts here below⁷⁷, but it clearly does insist that the intellect ceases to be ruled by these forces⁷⁸. It is thus the pre-condition for all further spiritual development, the requisite ordering and directing of the soul’s movement toward further knowledge⁷⁹. Given ἀπάθεια the soul is freed to reflect as in a mirror⁸⁰ – and to reflect on – the “images” of truth without being deflected by any negative force. Only at this point of his development is the monk enabled to see clearly into the workings of body and soul. He discerns the *logoi* of the enemy⁸¹ and stands, thus liberated, before the “door” opening onto the intelligible worlds⁸².

Ἀπάθεια is not a purely negative condition, merely an absence of disequilibrium. The process of *κάθαρσις* also embraces the purity of heart whose active expression is love: “the one supports and vitalizes the other... they are, as it were, the positive and negative poles of a single field of love”⁸³. The movement toward knowledge requires the disciplined stilling and channeling of the soul’s powers⁸⁴, but without love, “the friendship with God”⁸⁵, there is no motion at all. Love is as in Dionysius, though without either the latter’s stress on its transcendent origin and thrust⁸⁶, or its position (as in Nyssa) above rather than below knowledge (*γνώσις*), the great moving power toward union with God. Again, it results in that state to which we say⁸⁷ Dionysius gives the name *θεομίμησις*, providence exercised by the rational creature on behalf of its fellows. Purified of conflicting impulses, his mind become a mirror ready to reflect the spiritual realities underlying the worlds, the monk is ready to extend a disinterested charity toward all. He, having achieved ἀπάθεια, imitates the angels⁸⁸, can be said to have become *ισάγγελος*⁸⁹. He begins then to receive the true “nourishment [*τροφή*]” of

76. *Ibid.* 89 (689); recall also *DN VII* 893D-896B.

77. So, at least, Guillaumont believes: “Intro.”, *Ibid.* 110-111. See, however, the testimony of Palladius, *The Lausiac History XXXVIII*, ed. J. A. Robinson (1904) 122: we hear Evagrius on his deathbed saying: *τρίτον ἔτος ἔχων μὴ ὀχλούμενος ὑπὸ ἐπιθυμίας σαρκικῆς*.

78. *Pratique* 64 (648-649).

79. Note the prominence given *φρόνησις* as a pre-condition for ἀπάθεια and thus for σοφία, *Ibid.* 73 (660-661); also *Monks’ Mirror* 68 (159).

80. *KG V*.64.

81. *Pratique* 83 and 86 (672 and 677).

82. *KG V*.77.

83. Bamberger, lxxxv-lxxxvi; see also Guillaumont, “Intro.”, *Pratique*, 103.

84. And, of course, grace – see *KG I*.37.

85. *De Orat.* 77 1184D.

86. *Pratique*, “Prologue”, 8 (492-493), and *Monks’ Mirror* 67 (158).

87. Above, Chapter II, 100-101 and III, 137-139.

88. *De Orat.* 40 1176B.

89. *Ibid.* 113 1192D; and see Völker, *Kontemplation*, 200 for the *ισάγγελος* theme.

knowledge “which alone is wont to gather us together to the holy powers”⁹⁰. It is fully in accord with his general identification of τάξις with function that the monk who has achieved ἀπάθεια should then share in the providence of the angels. It is also more than reminiscent of Dionysius. To use the Areopagite’s vocabulary: the monk having himself been purified and illumined, turns like the hierarch of the *EH* (whom Dionysius also calls ἄγγελος and interpreter of divine judgment) to purify and illumine others⁹¹. He is ready to approach (here not very Dionysian) the premier virtue, knowledge⁹².

b) Natural contemplation or Φυσικὴ θεωρία which Evagrius divides into two parts, first

i) *The contemplation of the δεύτερα*

Here the mind, in the clarity of ἀπάθεια and given the impetus of love, rises from a purely sensible perception of bodies to the apprehension of the principles, λόγοι, determining their existence. These λόγοι embrace both 1) the providential intention of Christ with respect to each of the fallen νόες, the particular administration of that providence being the angelic τάξις, and 2) the judgment rendered on the fallenness of each νοῦς, i.e., the assignment to each of a state precisely equivalent to the degree of its defection and answering exactly to its particular needs. Evagrius will thus speak of the λόγοι of providence and judgment in a single phrase⁹³ and, in another⁹⁴, insist rightly on the priority of Providence. The Dionysian equivalents would, without the element of the primordial fall, concern τάξις and ἀναλογία. The contemplation of the δεύτερα, in any case, is thus the necessary expression of the state of ἰσάγγελος. It is the apprehension of, and participation in, the sense and intention of Christ’s Providence. This means in turn that one is led to the contemplation of the Jesus Christ, himself the “mind” of Providence, in and through and toward whom God has worked his saving will. The whole process, from the πρακτική through the contemplation of the δεύτερα, represents, as in Dionysius and the *EH*, assimilation to the person of Christ. Having achieved the point wherein are gathered the λόγοι of the δεύτερα, the ascending νοῦς arrives at the participation in the assembled “science” employed by Christ in judging the νόες and fashioning the worlds⁹⁵, and so necessarily at the sole contemplation of him who made them. Jesus is the λόγος of the λόγοι of Providence and judgment⁹⁶. The fallen mind,

90. *Pratique* 56 (630-633). “συνάπτειν ἡμᾶς ταῖς ἁγίαις δυνάμεσιν” recalls Dionysius’ use of συνάπτω, save of course that Evagrius intends literally the ultimate joining to a higher τάξις.

91. *KG* VI.90.

92. *KG* VI.57.

93. *KG* V.16 and 23.

94. *KG* V.24.

95. *KG* I.20.

96. *KG* I.77.

through personal effort and grace⁹⁷, once having apprehended this λόγος is ready to become the “inheritor of Christ”⁹⁸. It is ready for the second stage of natural contemplation.

i) *The contemplation of the Πρῶτα*

This is the contemplation of the *logikoi*, the intelligible – therefore true and original – creation. While the knowledge of the δεύτερα embraces the providential “science” or “wisdom” of Christ, that of the πρῶτα represents the “substance” of Christ’s wisdom⁹⁹, the primordial σοφία of the Creator. It is the Evagrian realm corresponding to Dionysius’ δυνάμεις or, better, the divine θελήματα. We arrive here at essential likenesses, and equally essential differences between the Evagrian and Dionysian schemes. The Evagrian hierarchies lead the νοῦς to full participation in Christ. They reveal him. This is like the *EH*. The great difference is that Evagrius has a double set of λόγοι or divine intentions. Christ is not the τέλος, and therefore the λόγοι of Providence are not equivalent to the original will or wisdom of the Creator, the Logos. Only once having achieved equality with Jesus, or at least a large share in his wisdom¹⁰⁰, is the mind enabled to rise to the intuition of the λόγοι gathered in the Word of God¹⁰¹ and so to the threshold of the Trinity¹⁰². At both levels the function of natural contemplation is the same. We cite Hausherr: “the contemplation of creatures does not consist in seeing those themselves, but... the reflection of the divine attributes of which they are the effects, the mirrors, the symbols”¹⁰³. For Dionysius, however, this means the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy since, in identifying Christ with τέλος, he unites the providential with the “original” will of God and the two Evagrian contemplations become a single φυσικὴ θεωρία¹⁰⁴.

Returning to Evagrius, the θεωρία of the λόγοι underlying the intelligible world is still an involvement of the mind in forms and “in multiplicity”¹⁰⁵. Perfection lies above the forms which may “impress upon the mind”¹⁰⁶. Beyond intellection, it abides in the “place [τόπος]” of “pure prayer”¹⁰⁷ wherein alone the

97. Monks’ Mirror 119 (163).

98. *KG* IV.4.

99. *KG* II.2.

100. Complete equality with Christ and thus full knowledge of His wisdom are not possible here below, see *KG* IV.20; also *De Orat.* 38 1176A, and, in comment, Hausherr, *Leçons*, 7.

101. See *De Orat.* 52 1178C.

102. Monks’ Mirror 136 (165).

103. *Leçons*, 94-95.

104. See our discussion above in Chapters III, 130-132, and IV, 219-229.

105. *De Orat.* 57-58 1180B.

106. *Ibid.* 67 1181AB.

107. *De Orat.* 3 1168CD: Ἡ προσευχή, ὁμιλία ἐστὶ νοῦ πρὸς Θεόν· ποίας οὖν δεῖται καταστάσεως ὁ νοῦς, ἵνα ἡσυχάσῃ ἀμεταστρόφως εὐσταθῆναι πρὸς τὸν οἰκεῖον Δεσπότην, καὶ συνομιλεῖν αὐτῷ μηδενὸς μεσιτεύοντος; see also Hausherr, *Leçons*, 16-17 and 98.

Logos manifests himself¹⁰⁸.

c) Essential science: ἐνωσις

The final “movement” of the νοῦς in its return up the levels of contemplation is its integration into the “essential science” or “light” – not darkness – of the Holy Trinity¹⁰⁹. This is to say that the last movement is the end of movement. It is the real “place” of νοῦς where again it becomes truly itself¹¹⁰, shedding the nature of “soul” added to it and returning to its original state¹¹¹. Here we arrive at two questions which bear, we believe, a certain relation to the *CD*: 1) have we the possibility of a direct encounter with God while still here below, or must we wait until the end? and 2) what is the nature of that encounter with “essential knowledge”, i.e., is it at all related to the ἔκστασις of Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius as distinct from Origen?

i) *Eschatology or ecstasy? the ladder of the ages*

Evagrius’ insistence in one text¹¹² that the νοῦς may not depart from itself when coupled with his assertion in another place¹¹³ that the embodied νοῦς is not capable of beholding the bodiless, would appear to require the necessity of ages to come before the experience of “essential knowledge” may be enjoyed. The ecstasy of other writers would then become for him the ascent up the hierarchies of being and knowledge, the transformation of “ecstasy into eschatology”¹¹⁴. Each level – Evagrius at one point¹¹⁵ gives us five steps of knowledge and elsewhere¹¹⁶ the reminder that only Christ possesses (or is possessed by) the fifth, the Holy Trinity – is a kind of intensification or concentration of the one preceding it, a gathering up into truth accompanied by a consequent shedding of the merely expedient or – better – providential. Each level of being therefore as represented by such terms as body, soul, human, angel, intellect, etc., represents “*moments of the knowledge of God itself*”¹¹⁷. Bearing that point in mind, let us recall again that the whole process is lent coherence by, finds its “mind” in, Christ whose providence

108. *Ibid.*; see also von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, 24, and Hausherr, “Doutes au sujet du divin Denys” *OCP* 2 (1936) 489 note 1, and esp. his more recent “Pierre l’Ibérien”, 256 and 260.

109. *KG* I.35; see also “Second partie du traité qui passe sur le nom de la Grande Lettre”, ed. G. Vitestam (1964) 28. The remainder of the “Great Letter to Melanie” has recently been rendered into English by M. Parmentier, “Evagrius of Pontus’ ‘Letter to Melanie’” *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Philosophie en Theologie* 46 (1985) 2-38; see 9-19 for the text of the letter.

110. *KG* III.72.

111. *KG* VI.85.

112. *KG* I.47.

113. *KG* IV.86.

114. Evans, *Leontius*, 106.

115. *KG* II.4.

116. *KG* I.19.

117. Evans, *Leontius*, 95 (italics in original).

is not a matter confined to each of our several lifetimes but to the several lifetimes of each. The intensifications of being and knowledge toward which he directs us and through which he guides us correspond, again, to different worlds. Thus the three “resurrections” described by Evagrius¹¹⁸ are in fact descriptions of this movement to knowledge through levels of being and so through time. This active concentration of reality, a gathering or pulling into the center, into the γνῶσις, is the activity of Providence – Evagrius’ *Heilsgeschichte* – as composed, conducted, and played by Christ. It will continue over ages yet to come, so long indeed as the νόεσς remain “susceptible” to augmentation or diminution¹¹⁹, i.e., to movement. Only at the last will motion and cycles cease¹²⁰, then, when all shall have attained to “co-inheritance” with Christ as united and equal in the original inheritance which is God¹²¹.

Yet, with all his insistence on the necessity of disincarnation for the vision of God, Evagrius often suggests that a real experience of God is possible for us here below. This comes to the fore particularly in his imagery of τόπος, φῶς, etc., and in the radical apophysis¹²² of “pure prayer” as outlined particularly in *De Orat.* 56-78. We feel this tension to be comparable – or in fact related – to that which many have remarked in the *CD*, i.e., between the ecstasy of the *MT* and *DN* and the elsewhere apparently rigid maintenance of the hierarchies. Comparable, too, is the key to its (at least partial) resolution.

We arrive at our point seven. The νοῦς, Evagrius tells us¹²³, is the temple (ναός) of God whose altar is the contemplation of the Holy Trinity. The latter, when considered in connection with what we have just noted concerning the Evagrian hierarchies as “moments of the knowledge of God”, leads us to our solution – and, we believe, very close to Dionysius. The universe, or worlds, of Evagrius, is in essence the fallen νοῦς writ large or, after the manner of Dionysius, the icon of humanity. They correspond very nearly indeed to that series of icons constituting the *EH* which we outlined at the conclusion of Chapter IV: the images of Providence, of Christ, of humanity, and of the soul. The world(s), to phrase the relationship yet another way, is in a sense Evagrius’ Church, the body of Christ, the way of initiation into the mystery of God. The parallels appear to us too striking to be considered accidental. No less significant, of course, are the differences: that the Evagrian cosmos is not the icon of the divine δυνάμεις, nor of the angels, represents Dionysius’ correction via the Cappadocians of the Origenist myth accepted by Evagrius. It is then no surprise to find another point of contact, and a no less significant difference, in their respective understandings

118. *KG* V.19, 22, and 25; see also *Monks’ Mirror* 40-43 (156).

119. *KG* III.85 and also 84.

120. *KG* V.89.

121. *KG* V.51

122. The phrase is Gendle’s, *Apophatic*, 421.

123. *KG* V.84.

of the supreme experience of God possible here below. First of all, both do agree that such is possible. That, for Evagrius, the mind is God's temple whose altar is the contemplation of the Trinity does imply that, even in the embodied state, some real anticipation of that "ultimate beatitude"¹²⁴ may be granted in the present age, that one may – if only momentarily – enter into the temple of one's own being to stand before that altar. The same would apply, in somewhat different form, to Dionysius: the Church both "images" and thereby enables our participation in the vision of the world to come, because it carries the mystery within it even now. Our point seven, in short.

In pursuance of the latter, and turning to the texts printed by Frankenberg in his Greek retroversion from the sixth-century Syriac translation, we find that the parallels multiply¹²⁵. For Evagrius as for the *MT* the key scriptural text is from Exodus, in particular Exod 24:10, and the vision that the elders of Israel have (in the LXX version) of the "place" of their God. Evagrius returns again and again to this text. Perhaps his most complete statement comes in the following from *Ep.* 39, wherein we may detect echoes not only of the *MT*, but of the angelic liturgy as well:

If then by the grace of God the intellect both turns away from these [the passions] and puts off the old man, then it will as well see its own constitution at the time of prayer like a sapphire or in the color of heaven, which recalls as well what the scripture names the place of God seen by the elders on Mount Sinai. It calls this the place and the vision the peace by which one sees in oneself that peace which surpasses every intellect and which guards our heart. For another heaven [ἄλλος οὐρανός] is imprinted on a pure heart, the vision of which is both light and the spiritual place, because within it are beheld so many [great things]: the meaning of beings and the holy angels who sojourn with the worthy¹²⁶.

The visionary encounters the whole company of heaven together with the light from above. Turning to other significant Biblical images in Evagrius' lexicon, and related to the themes of temple and Sinai so important to Dionysius as well, we note first of all his citation of Ps 75:3 in order to declare that the soul is the true Zion, God's intended dwelling place (κατοικητήριον)¹²⁷. Referring to Genesis 28, the "revelation of the mysteries of God" is the ladder revealed to Jacob which

124. *Pratique*, Prologue 8 (493).

125. W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Pontikos* (Berlin: 1912), esp. the appended supplement to the *Gnostic Chapters*, 429-465, and the *Letters*, 561-633. For a German translation, with introduction and commentary, of the latter, see G. Bunge, *Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier: 1986).

126. *Ep.* 39 (Frankenberg 593). For more echoes of Exod 24:10, see also chapters 2 (425), 4 (427), 21 (441), and 25 (449). For the νοῦς as "altar" of God, see chapter 45 (461), and as temple, chapter 37 (457). Note in chapter 4 (427) that the light beheld is not simply equal to the soul. It is other, God's.

127. Chapter 28 (453). See also *KG* V.88 and VI.49 for the Zion motif.

the soul ascends “by degress [ἀναβαθμῶν] of virtue toward “perfect union [or “mingling”, σύμμιξις] with God”¹²⁸. Babai, Evagrius’ Syriac commentator, sees Jacob’s ladder as the heavenly hierarchy “by which we ascend to God”¹²⁹. For Evagrius, the knowledge of the Trinity is the “spiritual mountain” that is difficult to approach (recall Exod 19), but revealed to the “intellect stripped of the passions”¹³⁰. In a work preserved under the name of Nilus of Ancyra, Evagrius both spiritualizes the Eucharistic words of Jesus – the “bread” is a “type” of the intellect – and cites the prophet’s vision in Isa 6:1ff for the soul or intellect as “throne” of God: “For it is there that God takes his seat, and there that he is known”¹³¹. Finally, he expresses the following wish to a correspondent:

May the Lord grant that the noonday [μεσημβρία] of your virtue be radiant, and that your tabernacle [σκηνή] become the lodging of the holy angels and of our Savior, Jesus Christ¹³².

These texts, together with the temple theme and especially the two citations concerning the tabernacle and throne, the inhabitation of Christ and the “noonday” of virtue, call to mind in particular our discussion of the *CD*’s *Epistle* III and the Dionysian “suddenly”. Neither are we the first to note a correspondence between the Platonist ἐξαίφνης and Evagrius in this regard. In a fascinating article, A. Guillaumont took up the Evagrian use of the temple, throne, and Sinai motifs in order to draw a connection between them and the “sudden” vision of light described by Plotinus in *Enn.* V.3.17; 5.7; and VI.7.36¹³³. N. S’ed followed up on this essay by exploring Evagrius’ treatment of Exod 24:10 (and Ps 75:3) in relation to the tradition of the Targums and the Syriac *Peshitta*¹³⁴. S’ed’s conclusions are striking. According to him, Evagrius in fact follows the Targums and *Peshitta* in his use of Exodus 24, while at the same time his “vision of peace”

128. Chapter 43 (459).

129. *Ibid.* (460).

130. *Ep.* 58 (607-609). In *Ep.* 25 (583), written probably to one of his acquaintances in Jerusalem, Evagrius proposes a spiritual itinerary, linking the different places associated with the life of Christ to the progress of his interlocutor’s soul and concluding with the Mount of Olives.

131. *PG* LXXIX, 1228C. This text, particularly its spiritualization of the Eucharist, was underlined by H. V. Beyer in “Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts” *XVI Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress* (Wien: 1981) 473-512, esp. 484. The same also rightly notes the impress of the Evagrian heaven within the soul on the blue mandorla of Christ in Paleologan icons depicting the Transfiguration, though oddly he fails to include their prototype in the Sinai mosaic.

132. *Ep.* 33 (589).

133. “La vision de l’intellect par lui-même dans la mystique évagrienne”, in *Mélanges de l’Université Saint Joseph* L,1 (Beirut: 1984) 255-262. H. V. Beyer, “Die Lichtlehre”, esp. 478, has also drawn a connection between Evagrius and Plotinus, though limiting himself to *KG* I.35 alone as textual support.

134. “La Shekinta et ses amis araméens” *Cahiers d’Orientalisme* XX (1988) 233-242.

links him closely to the Targumic tradition, even down to the haggadic play on the name “Jerusalem:” “Sans connaître le terme technique araméen *shekinta*, Évagre suit la ligne interrompue de l’interprétation traditionnelle – Salem, Jerusalem, vision de la paix, demeure de la Présence”. His was thus “la première interiorisation intellectuelle dont nous ayons une attestation écrite” – i.e., for him the spiritual Sinai is within the νοῦς¹³⁵.

The consequence of these insights for a proper accounting of Dionysius’ sources is in our view most significant. First, we note the internalization of the Sinai motif as having already occurred in Evagrius. Second, there is the fact that his handling of Sinai and Zion links him to Aramaic and Syrian traditions, and this, in view of the parallels we have already seen between him and Dionysius, seems to provide added weight to the idea of the latter as himself in turn related to Syrian Christianity. Third, the Areopagite’s handling of the “sudden” is clearly foreshadowed by Evagrius and, moreover, betrays precisely the same kind of blending of Platonist and Biblical allusions as the great ascetic writer had managed over a century before the likely composition of the *CD*. Indeed, in light of the *Vita Antonii*’s own use of the “sudden”, Evagrius himself might be part of a tradition antedating his own works, and to which both he and the Areopagite are simply witnesses¹³⁶. Fourth, however, what we might call the ecclesial echoes in Dionysius’ “sudden” and his use of Sinai, in particular the background of the liturgy and the Eucharist, are largely missing in Evagrius. We shall thus be obliged to search out that missing element in other sources, and find it we shall in – again – men who are writing out of Christian Syria¹³⁷.

There remains the matter of Evagrius’ supreme experience itself, the vision of the “light of the Holy Trinity”. For further discussion of the likenesses and contrasts between the two writers we turn to our second question.

ii) *The nature of essential knowledge in Evagrius: ἔκστασις or κατάστασις?*

Evagrius has, first of all, often been contrasted with such advocates of negative theology as Nyssa and the Areopagite. Hausherr, for example, opposes

135. *Ibid.* 242. S’ed also points, 238 and 242, to parallels with Ephrem’s use of Exodus 19 and 24 in his *Paradise Hymns*, a point to which we shall return in the following chapter.

136. We return to the use of the “sudden” in Chapter IX below, 363-364, 367-368 and 387-388, particularly in connection with Ephrem Syrus and Symeon Stylites.

137. Two other resemblances between *CD* and Evagrius deserve mention, at least in a footnote. In his *Epistles* 27 and 56 (583-585 and 605), as well as elsewhere (eg. *Ep.* 36 [591] and 41 [595]), Evagrius goes back to Moses and David as exemplars of the mystics. Of note for us is his underlining of the meekness (πραότης) of these two figures as the essential prerequisite for the vision of God. Likewise, in Dionysius’ *Ep.* VIII, we find the latter pointing out Moses and David (as well as others) to Demophilus as examples, exactly, of the meekness (πραότης) necessary for the approach to God (1084B-5B, 171.3-172.10, “meekness” in 171.4 and 6). For something, secondly, very like the Areopagite’s treatment of evil in *DN* IV:18 ff., see *Ep.* 30 (587), 43 (597), and 59 (609).

Evagrius' "katastatic" theology to the ecstatic interpretation of encounter with God found in Gregory and in the *CD*¹³⁸. The contrast, and particularly that between Evagrius and Dionysius, has been somewhat overdrawn. Here once again we follow Gendle¹³⁹. The latter noted that Evagrius' use of Exod 24:9-11 indicated a "katastatic" rather than an "ecstatic" experience¹⁴⁰. As we have noted, however, Gendle also points to certain previously unstressed elements in Evagrius: the presence of the divine οὐσία/δυνάμεις distinction and the need of grace, features that link the disciple to his partially Cappadocian antecedents. We feel they also link him to Dionysius. True, there seems to be no ecstasy, no enraptured transcending of creaturely limits in Evagrius' scheme of things¹⁴¹, and here we must admit a difference from both the Areopagite and – perhaps even more so – the Nyssene. Evagrius' encounter takes place within the mind, at the τόπος θεοῦ. On the other hand, his stress on the νοῦς as "susceptible to God [δεκτικὸς θεότητος]" and his corresponding remark that the power of "essential knowledge" in which lies the νοῦς' proper repose is not at the same time co-natural to it¹⁴², do recall to us both that δύναμις or faculty of ἔνωσις in Dionysius by which we are united to God beyond intellection, and the *CD*'s insistence that it is always the power or love of God which is the active force within us. Hausherr's contrasting of Evagrian "activité" with Dionysian "passivité" would therefore also appear to be exaggerated¹⁴³. For the monastic theologian, too, there is at the end a "suffering of divine things [πάθων τὰ θεῖα]". Although we cannot say that Evagrius subsequently follows Moses into the darkness beyond the τόπος θεοῦ, still it does appear that he shares here, too, with the *CD*¹⁴⁴.

Yet even here matters are not as clearcut as the usual reading of light (Evagrius) versus darkness (Dionysius) allows. We saw above in dealing with the "sudden", as well as elsewhere in the *CD*, that if one were to choose between light and dark as signaling the ultimate for Dionysius, one would have to give the nod to the former. By the same token, H. Bacht has suggested that Evagrius' "gleaming light is at the same time deepest darkness"¹⁴⁵. Bunge has argued at length for the

138. "Contemplation", *DSp* 2:1827ff.

139. Gendle, 410ff. More recently, see his article, "Cappadocian Elements in the Mystical Theology of Evagrius Ponticus" *SP* 16/2 (1985) 373-384. Gendle does come down, though, finally for a natural – or "restorative" – experience, not the "violent" ecstasy of Dionysius Areopagite (esp. 381-382). We are not so sure the contrast holds. See thus also G. Bunge, "On the Trinitarian Mysticism of Evagrius".

140. *Ibid.* 416.

141. Yet, see the discussion in Sherwood, *Ambigua*, 127-128. And Frankenberg sees fit to include ἔκστασις at one point in his retroversion; Chapter 30 (455).

142. *KG* V.77.

143. Hausherr, "Grands Courants", 124-125.

144. Besides Sherwood, Bouyer somewhat anticipates us here; see his *History of Spirituality* I:413.

145. H. Bacht, "Evagrius Ponticus und Pachomius von Tabennesi: das Zeugnis des Ursprungs", in *Zeugen christlicher Gotteserfahrung*, ed. J. Sudbrack (Mainz: 1981) 42.

Trinitarian character of Evagrian mysticism¹⁴⁶, and we recall that the *MT* begins with a Trinitarian invocation. Further, we would underline the fact that for Evagrius the experience of the divine light is not a purely natural state. While the “form of the soul” is indeed in the “likeness of heaven”, it is precisely beyond [ὑπέω] this heaven that “the light of the Trinity shines forth at the time of prayer”¹⁴⁷. The divine light is a gift. It “inclines by grace to the knowledge of the soul”, and this is so because the Trinity is not any created thing, but alone and unique is “essential knowledge... unsearchable and incomprehensible”¹⁴⁸. It “dawns” or “rises [ἀνατέλλοντος]” in the soul at the time of prayer¹⁴⁹. The one certain difference that we can find between the anchorite and the Areopagite is that the former sees the beatific vision as the cessation of any and all motion¹⁵⁰ while the latter does not. This one significant difference points again to Evagrius’ debt to Origen’s myth and Dionysius’ deliberate rejection of it. Together with, and doubtless following, Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius clearly belongs to the same “family” as Evagrius while just as clearly accepting the Nyssene’s correction of the great Alexandrian where the anchorite does not.

C. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION: EVAGRIUS AND AREOPAGITICA

Dionysius differs sharply from Evagrius. He emphasizes God’s absolute transcendence, rejects the Origenist myth of a first creation, affirms creaturely κίνησις and with it the permanence of change and of variety, i.e., hierarchy, and finally maintains the Incarnation as the true ἐνανθρώπησις of God and therefore at the core of the mystery of human salvation – as, indeed, *the* Mystery now present among us. All this is of course simply to reaffirm what we have said concerning that Cappadocian correction of Origen, of which we believe the Areopagite to have been a faithful student.

Yet for all their differences, the parallels between Evagrius and Dionysius are quite as striking. These could not have been fortuitous¹⁵¹. Recalling, for example, Evagrius’ perfected anchorite, already foreshadowed in the *Vita Antonii* and in the persons of the great desert sages, and our having seen the worlds and the divine economy as it were summed up in this figure, it is surely neither accidental nor unrelated that we find Dionysius taking such care throughout his works¹⁵² to

146. “The Trinitarian Mysticism of Evagrius Ponticus”.

147. *Chapter* 4 (Frankenberg 427).

148. *Ep.* 29 (587).

149. *Ep.* 17 (579). Recall Plotinus in *Enn.* V.5.8 awaiting the One’s rising like the dawn.

150. See for example *Chapters* 45 and esp. 43 (461 and 465).

151. Other scholars whom we have noted already, von Balthasar and Bouyer, have seen some of these parallels. We should add A. Dempf, “Evagrius Pontikos als Metaphysiker und Mystiker” *PJ* LXXVII (1970) 297-319. If anything, Dempf exaggerates the likenesses between Evagrius and Dionysius in order to arrive, via both, at Thomas Aquinas (315-316), and even to posit Evagrius as Dionysius’ mentor, Hierotheos, 317.

152. But esp. in *Epistle* VIII. Thus see Koch, *Mysterienwesen* 18.

insist both upon the bishop's supreme authority and the monk's subordination. He even goes to the extent of enshrining monastic tonsure in the Church's liturgy in order to underline the monk's proper place: under the authority of the clergy¹⁵³. That he felt obliged to do so indicates a continuing ferment, a threat to established ecclesiastical order and the sacraments of the visible Church¹⁵⁴. We shall see in the following chapter that, in his effort to salvage both the charismatic Christian gnostic and the sacramental dispensation, he also fits within a continuum, taking up lines of thought that had been extant in the region for over a century.

For now, however, we deal with the question of a specifically Origenist ferment in the Holy Land and surrounds that we can place the Areopagite within, and to which he could have been responding. There are several indications that the Origenist debate carried on without break from Origen's condemnation and the expulsion of the Origenist monks from Egypt at the turn of the fifth century to Justinian's condemnation in 543, and even beyond¹⁵⁵. If we place Dionysius in Syria-Palestine at the end of the fifth century, and further assume his acquaintance with the monastic-ascetic tradition, for which there can be no doubt, then he had to have had an intimate knowledge of both Evagrius and the Evagrian current (as well as a certain amount of sympathy for them). We should thus also be able to situate the main lines of much of his thought as in continuity with the critique of Evagrian and post-Evagrian Origenism as that criticism was expressed both before and after the appearance of the *Areopagitica*. Let us glance first at the critique, and then move on to three figures from the early sixth century who were connected both to Dionysius and to Evagrius: Stephen bar Sudaili, Sergius of Reshaina, and John of Scythopolis.

E. Clark has done us the service of analyzing the early debate. Several issues that the latter raised go to the heart of the *CD*. There is first of all Ephiphanius of Salamis' complaint that Origen denied the body: "Having allowed itself to be tamed in holiness, then it should not be deprived of a reward along with its soul"¹⁵⁶. We recall particularly *EH* VII.1.1 where Dionysius' speaks of the ὁμόζυ-

153. Dionysius appears to have been the first to do this. See K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 205-206, on this point and its popularity among the monks. They quite welcomed tonsure as a sacrament and "second baptism". The move did not really work as Dionysius meant it, though, as Holl also makes clear.

154. Thus see P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority*, and the studies of P. Brown collected in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: 1982), esp. 103-195. G. Bunge has specifically underlined the importance of Clement's true gnostic for Evagrius, "Origenismus - Gnostizismus" 45-47 (esp.47), and we have noted the parallels between Clement and Dionysius.

155. See Guillaumont, *Les "Kephalaia"*, esp. 81-135, for this continuity; Sherwood, *The Lesser Ambigua* for its continuation past Justinian; and E. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Church Debate* (Princeton: 1992), for its beginnings and early ramifications. We would add the articles by Bunge, "Évagre et les deux Macaires", "Hénade où Monade?", and "Origenismus - Gnostizismus", together with D. Evans, "Leontius of Byzantium and Dionysius".

156. Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 92, summarizing Ephiphanius in *Panarion* 64:71 (*GCS* 31:519).

γα σώματα, having sweated and struggled with the soul (συναθλήσαντα), receiving their just reward¹⁵⁷, and the same language a paragraph later against those who dissolve the συζυγία of body and soul, a critique that is moreover seconded by the Scholiast's specific mention of Origen¹⁵⁸. Secondly, Clark quotes Jerome's citation of Theophilus of Alexandria's *Festal Letter* of 403 A.D. She notes Jerome's critique of the Origenist equation of κίνησις (*motus*) with the Fall, and continues: "The very beauty of the world (κόσμος) depends on its ornamentation with creatures... [yet] On Origen's understanding of creation... there could be no ranking... [among the angels] without a precosmic fall, that is the hierarchy... would be the product of sin"¹⁵⁹. Here, therefore, are the very building blocks of the *CD*: motion, beauty (κόσμος) and τάξις – hierarchy, in short. Finally, in the same passage, she also includes Theophilus' complaint against Origen's "slandorous" limitation of God's power, at which point we recall the divine infinity that Dionysius has taken from Nyssa and Clement, and which comprises an essential component of the defense of motion.

Just over a century later we find exactly the same critique, this time specifically against Evagrius, lodged by a Syriac-speaking ecclesiastic and authority on the spiritual life, Philoxenus of Mabboug. The latter, one of the most distinguished spokesmen for the struggle against Chalcedon, criticized particularly Evagrius' lack of a permanent place for variety (κόσμος, we might say), for permanent differences in rank and order (τάξις), or for change and development (κίνησις)¹⁶⁰. Philoxenus may also have been the earliest translator of Evagrius into Syriac¹⁶¹. Finally, he had genuine cause to be worried about Evagrian influence, since there were live, Syriac-speaking Origenists in his own area, in particular one Stephen bar Sudaili, to whom the bishop of Mabboug had been obliged to write a very sharp letter¹⁶².

Stephen brings us to the first of our three figures and unquestionably the most curious. If he is indeed the author of the *Book of the Holy Hierotheos*, and if the present late MSS are relatively untampered with and unadulterated – altogether rather an "iffy" proposal – then we discover a quite extraordinary mingling of Dionysius with Evagrius occurring sometime between 494 and 512, the latter being the years between which Philoxenus wrote his letter¹⁶³. Guillaumont's

157. 533AB (121:2-7).

158. 533BC (121:10 ff.), and PG IV 176A.

159. Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 115, summarizing Jerome's own summary of Theophilus in the former's *Ep.* 98 (CSEL 55:194 ff.).

160. See G. Harb, "L'attitude de Philoxène de Mabboug à l'égard de la spiritualité savante d'Évagre le Pontique" *ParO* (1969) esp. 142-146, 149, and 155. Harb works chiefly from Philoxenus' *Letter to Patricius*.

161. See, however, J. W. Watt, "Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version of Evagrius" *OC* (1980) 65-87.

162. See F. S. Marsh's edition, translation, and introduction to Stephen's work, *The Book of the Holy Hierotheos* (London: 1927) 223-224 for Philoxenus' letter.

163. See Marsh, *Hierotheos*, 191-224 for the MS tradition. There is relatively little

recovery of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, together with his own research in the area of Syriac-speaking Christianity, has made more likely Philoxenus' linkage of this strange figure with Evagrius¹⁶⁴, and Bunge has recently pinpointed some of Stephen's misreadings of Evagrius¹⁶⁵. But the document itself seeks to link its doctrine, in effect a pantheism with strong gnostic overtones, to the Areopagite, and to portray Evagrius' temporary hierarchies in the language of Dionysius' permanent ones¹⁶⁶. In all, it is clearly Evagrius (though the Evagrius of a dream) who predominates, and it is the *CD* that is assimilated to him. Yet the very fact of this juxtaposition and its date, given the qualifications noted above, are significant. Someone else was reading both men before the end of the fifth century and making connections between them, even if those connections were very odd and not altogether coherent.

Not so odd, but still quite as interesting, is another figure from the Syriac-speaking world, Sergius of Reshaina (d. 536), Dionysius' earliest translator into Syriac. According to the Ps. Zachary of Mitylene, Sergius was a man "practiced in the reading of many books of the Greeks and of Origen", a onetime student in Alexandria, and a rather indifferent non-Chalcedonian who, in fact, ended his life in Constantinople within the Chalcedonian camp¹⁶⁷. His translation work, besides including certain of Aristotle's works and Porphyry's *Eisagoge*¹⁶⁸, included the earliest renderings we know of into Syriac of both Dionysius and Evagrius¹⁶⁹. That Sergius read the Dionysian corpus in a very Evagrian light, though without reference to the Origenist myth of a precosmic fall, is immediately clear from even a cursory reading of his *Mimro* prefacing the translation¹⁷⁰. He does, though, admit to having written most of the preface before commencing the translation itself¹⁷¹. Nonetheless, his witness to a relation or correlation of some kind between

scholarly literature on Stephen other than Marsh. Of note are I. Hausherr, "L' influence du *Livre de saint Hierothée*" *OC* XXX.3 (1932) 34-69, and D. Bundy, "The Book of the Holy Hierotheos and Manicheanism" *Aug* XXVI (1986) 273-280.

164. See his *Les Kephalaia*, 311-332, for particular attention to Stephen.

165. "Hénade ou monade", esp. 79.

166. See esp. *Hierotheos*, Discourses I.12 (Marsh 20-25) for the angels; II.3 (28) for the language of the *MT*; 17-18 (39-42) for a mystic Eucharist; 20 (44) for hierarchy; III.1 (64) for Thabor; and 6-7 (77-82) for the *voûs* as true hierarch and Christ as priest celebrating the Eucharist for the angels.

167. Zachary of Mitylene, *The Syrian Chronicle*, trans. Hamilton and Brooks (1899) XI.19 (266-268).

168. Ortiz, *Patristica Syriaca* (1965) 110-111.

169. See P. Sherwood, "Sergius of Reshaina and the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Denys" *SacE* 4 (1952) 174-184; Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia*, 222-227 (and see 327, note 90 where Guillaumont wonders if Sergius and bar-Sudaili were not possibly linked); and G. Wiessner, "Zur Handschriftüberlieferung des syrischen Fassung des Corpus Dionysiacum" *NAG* (1972) 165-216.

170. See "Mimro de Serge de Rešayna sur la vie spirituelle", ed. and trans. P. Sherwood, *OSyr* 5 (1960) 433-57, 6 (1961) 95-115 and 121-56.

171. *Ibid.* 69 (112-113) and 114 (146-147).

Evagrius and Dionysius, if not the exact equivalence he wishes to establish, should be taken seriously¹⁷². This is a man, given his simultaneous acquaintance with philosophy, who must have known something about the subject. He thus also fits within a pattern.

The pattern becomes clearer still with John of Scythopolis, bishop of that Palestinian city from 536-548, who has increasingly become a center of scholarly attention as the author of many of the *Scholia* on Dionysius in *PG* IV¹⁷³. John's proximity to the likely date of the *CD*'s composition, within no more than two generations and perhaps less, his Palestinian location, and finally his persistent interest – other than in the Christological furore where much of his energy is concentrated (and where scholarly interest in him is likely to focus, understandably) – in issues pertaining to Origenism¹⁷⁴, all seem to point toward and lend support to our feeling that Dionysius is somehow connected with both the debate over Origen/Evagrius, and with Christian Palestine (at least the latter in an extended sense). Without distinguishing John's hand from the other *Scholia*, and at rough count, we find Origen mentioned nine times and once obliquely. Of those nine references, three bear on the body and the Resurrection¹⁷⁵. Evagrius appears twice expressly, and twice in a way that clearly suggests him¹⁷⁶. Whatever John's motives in defending Dionysius and, indeed, seeking to lay claim to him, it seems

172. Thus *Ibid.* 115-119, with its equation of the *EH* with Evagrius' προακτική, the *CH* with the θεωρία of the δεύτερα, the *DN* with that of the πρώτα, and the *MT* with the θεολογία. The last has a certain cogency, but not so much the first three.

173. The earliest work was von Balthasar's "Das Scholienwerk des Johannes von Scythopolis" *Schol* 15 (1940) 31-66, expanded in *Kosmische Liturgie* 644-672, but the most breathtaking results came forty years later in a series of articles by B. M. Suchla, "Die sogenannten Maximus Scholien des Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum" *NAG* (1980) 31-66, and "Eine Redaktion des griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum im Umkreis von Johannes von Scythopolis, des Verfassers von Prolog und Scholien" *NAG* (1985) 1-18. The articles examined the Greek, Latin, and Syriac MSS in order to single out in a clear way John's *Scholia* from other hands. They also demonstrated that the *CD* had been handed down *en bloc* from the earliest. Thus Suchla's very sharp criticism in "Eine Redaktion" 17-18 of Brons' attempts, *Sekundäre Textparteien*, to discover later additions to the Dionysian works on literary-critical grounds. W. Beierwaltes and R. Kannicht have pointed to John's unacknowledged use of Plotinus, thereby demonstrating a familiarity with Neoplatonism, in "Plotin Testimonia bei Johannes von Scythopolis" *Hermes* XCVI (1968) 247-251. P. Rorem and J. Lamoreaux have recently published "John of Scythopolis on Apollinarian Christology and the Pseudo-Areopagite's true Identity" *CH* 62.4 (1993) 469-82, and have promised a translation and commentary on the *Scholia* to come.

174. Noted by von Balthasar, "Scholienwerk", 22-23; Sherwood, *Ambigua* 75-76; and Rorem and Lamoreaux, "John of Scythopolis", 424-425.

175. *PG* IV 20CD, 65D (Resurrection), 172C-173B (on the Resurrection and vs. the ἀποκατάστασις), 173CD, 176A, 197C (oblique), 337D, 545C (vs. Origen's defamation of the body), and 549B.

176. 76D-77A (quoting *KG* II.3), 172A (on the Resurrection, quoting *KG* II.78 and V.19), 252A (oblique, though the language is Evagrian); and 332C (oblique, but in the context of a defense of change, and thus likely vs. Origenism).

clear to us that these included more than simply an attempt to “co-opt his Monophysite opponents’ apostolic witness”¹⁷⁷. We think that he had other irons in the fire, up to and including a possible acquaintance with the mysterious author himself whose writings John clearly admired. This is, however, somewhat to anticipate our conclusions below. For now, our purposes in this section are complete: 1) there was a continuum of criticism of and interest in Evagrius; 2) it was concentrated in Syria-Palestine; and 3) at least three prominent figures at the sixth-century end of the process were directly involved both with this continuum, and with Dionysius.

1. The Corpus Dionysiacum: a “Neoplatonized Origenism?”

We are primarily concerned with the shape of Dionysius’ thought in relation particularly to his Christian predecessors. Now, it is precisely that shape that establishes the link we feel exists with Evagrius and therefore that justifies the admittedly rather curious expression, “Neoplatonized Origenism”, that we have chosen to head this sub-section. It deserves some explanation. Briefly, we have sought in this chapter to describe the system of one, very important, disciple of Origen and to indicate the parallels that it has with that of the *CD*. It seems to us that those parallels, especially Evagrius’ elaboration and sharpening of Origen’s general vision of the creation as providential, as a τάξις bearing the γνῶσις of Christ, as centered on Christ, and finally as the divinely-willed image of humanity (= νοῦς) intended to instruct us and bring us back to ourselves, to Christ, and thus to God, are of significance to the creation of the *CD*. The following we would call Dionysius’ Origenism: the attempt to portray creation as ἀναγωγή, as the τάξις enabling return (ἐπιστροφή) to God that is given uniquely in and through Christ. As for the “Neoplatonized”, Dionysius was first of all simply another participant in the long Christian (and pre-Christian, Philo) dialogue with late Platonism that began long before Origen. Regarding specifically Neoplatonic elements, he was, secondly, already the heir of a very important Christian-Platonist exchange, itself involving the modification of Origen, via the Cappadocians. His own particular contribution from late Neoplatonism lay, thirdly, in the introduction of the hierarchies as well as, of course, a great deal of the rather rococo vocabulary whose sources in pagan literature have been so admirably detailed by Koch. Yet, his is an Origenism – as just defined – that has been “Neoplatonized”, and not the reverse. His hierarchies are not temporary, pedagogic devices, true, but even less are they causal chains or successive demiurges. Rather, like those of Evagrius, they are a mystagogy. They proclaim; they reveal; they initiate into the Mystery that accomplishes our return. As with Evagrius’, Dionysius’ hierarchies are the work of Christ, and unlike the earlier man’s, they will continue to show forth Jesus, who is God, forever. The Incarnation for Dionysius does not cease with the eschaton.

177. Rorem/Lamoreaux, “John of Scythopolis” 428. But, see *Ibid.* for an acknowledgement of “broader issues”.

2. The mystery of the Church: eternal worship

Let us put the matter another way by recalling our remarks above concerning the world as Evagrius' Church. Dionysius has simply reversed this equation: the Church, our hierarchy, is his world. Like the Evagrian, his is a world that is a providential order (τάξις) bearing a knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and thereby enabling an activity (ἐνέργεια) that in turn effects the soul's purification, illumination, and union with God – in short, the vision of God and likening (ὁμοιωσις) to him. Evagrius distinguishes Christ from God. Dionysius does not, and therein we contend – above and beyond any talk of late Neoplatonist influence – lies the basic difference informing his alterations of the earlier thinker's system. For the author of the *CD* Christ does not merely reveal the structures of creation he designed after the Fall. Instead, through the Incarnation he constitutes them. In becoming human, Jesus grants us the new, theandric πολιτεία. In a sense, therefore, Dionysius' world is a narrower one than Evagrius'. The angels, for example, remain our instructors and guides, and, through Christ and the newly-centered world he brings us, we are joined to their liturgy, but the two worlds of humans and of angels no longer belong to one and the same grand scheme. Our world, that which embraces – and always will embrace – the sensible creation, finds its very being, sense and coherence, in the Incarnate Christ, thus in the hierarchy that is his body, and so ultimately at the altar of the Church's Liturgy. Effectively therefore, Dionysius has put the Church and its organized worship in the place of Evagrius' providential cosmos.

In order further to illustrate our point, let us address the following questions to the two writers: What is the Christian to do? Where is the encounter with God? Evagrius would reply in favor of the ἀναχώρησις, of the solitary's ascetic effort, armed with the "data" of Revelation, to master himself and to contemplate the world wherein – i.e., in the mastery and the contemplation – he will meet God. Dionysius, on the other hand, answers: "*the Christian goes to Church*". We do not, naturally, wish to suggest that the Areopagite intends thereby to deny or belittle ascetic effort – he clearly does not – but he has as clearly altered the, as it were, center of gravity, the locus of encounter. It is at the altar, in and through the celebration of the mysteries as administered by the tiered ranks of the clergy and as received by the ordered masses of the faithful, that the Christian is to find his place in the world and the meaning of the world, the λόγος of his and the world's being, and so the fulfillment of his being through the γνῶσις thus given and obtained. The bishop, albeit remaining a charismatic figure, replaces the anchorite, and he does so most emphatically. Here one might recall the bishop's role in another Syrian, Ignatius of Antioch. In a curious sense, Dionysius has "institutionalized" the Origenist ἀναγωγή – so long, that is, as we do not understand "institution" in a purely hard and legal sense, as simply a formal collective bound by certain rules. Our author is, after all, a species of Origenist and his ἀναγωγή retains the flavor of a fundamentally personal affair, essentially contemplative, and not the basis for a dynamic doctrine of the Church militant or, even, of the magisterium. None-

theless, it is decidedly centripetal rather than centrifugal. It pulls into the center of a visible, established, and public worship.

Dionysius thus expressed this centripetal thrust in such a way that it affirmed the contemplative Christian in his or her silent prayer. His “institutionalizing” takes nothing away from Evagrius’ inward ascent. The spiritual mountain is still there, and it remains the calling of every believer to make the climb. But that mountain and its ascent have been superimposed onto the Christian assembly at worship, Clement’s “true gnostic” onto the Ignatian bishop, the encounter with Christ in light onto the Church’s altar and the consecrated elements, and the structures of the human soul onto the very “geography” of the believers gathered for prayer¹⁷⁸. Yet this was not to turn Christian worship into “mere” symbol, nor the sacraments into a moving illustration of no further interest once its meaning had been decoded. Perhaps rather than superimposition, with its “Nestorian” ring, we should speak instead of a fusion, a union or a “mingling”. The hidden, whether of God or of the soul, is revealed in the manifest without loss or confusion. It permeates the visible. This side of the eschaton it can only be glimpsed, but “then” it will be all in all. The “it” in question has a name, and that name is Jesus. Here is the meaning at once of Dionysius’ attraction to Neoplatonism, especially to Iamblichan theurgy, and of the latter’s transformation at his hands. The philosopher’s longing to meet the needs of a “weak” human soul with the revelation of “unspeakable rites” linking us directly to the gods finds its counterpart, its end and fulfillment, in the presence of the incarnate Christ informing the Church’s worship, just as Evagrius’ sacramental cosmos discovers its own transformation into the κόσμος of the divine liturgy¹⁷⁹. The visible world, i.e., the world of the Church, remains fully sacramental. At the same time, it also continues to serve – as did Evagrius’ universe and Origen’s before him – as the image of the soul. It mediates the “hidden” of Jesus, now in veiled fashion and openly – φανοτάταις μαρμαρυγαῖς – at the eschaton.

Our account of Dionysius’ sources is not yet complete, however. Commentary on the Church’s liturgy was a genre already over a century old at the time of the *CD*’s likely composition, and the latter as an example of this genre has been frequently noted¹⁸⁰. At the same time, the *EH* has been singled out as a very peculiar instance of this type of commentary: “timeless”, “allegorical”, not only failing to account for the sacraments but actually dissolving them¹⁸¹. We shall in consequence devote relatively little space in the following chapter to the nascence and character of liturgical commentary, and much more to our investigation of

178. For the last point, see A. Louth, *Denys*, 54-55.

179. For the point on Iamblichus and the role of his theurgy in relation to Dionysius, we are particularly indebted to J. M. Rist, “Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul”, in *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought*, ed. H. J. Westra (Leiden/NY: 1992) 136-161.

180. Most recently by Rorem, *Commentary*, 91-126, esp. 118-126.

181. See again *Ibid.*

the sources for that “timelessness” and “allegory”. This is because Dionysius owes a debt to earlier, primarily fourth century and Syrian sources for both the genre of his treatise on “our hierarchy”, and for his reading of the latter as the soul writ large. In other words, he had the “makings”, as it were, of his response to Evagrian Origenism not only in the works of a Iamblichus or a Proclus, but also – and we think even more importantly – in the ascetical literature of his native, Christian Syria. The last point will take us into uncharted waters, at least so far as Dionysian scholarship is concerned, but we are confident that a new world awaits our discovery.

CHAPTER IX

SYRIA: MYSTAGOGUES AND MESSALIANS

A. FOURTH-CENTURY MYSTAGOGY *THE PHENOMENON*

We intend in these few lines merely to note the existence, or nascence, of a phenomenon in the fourth-century Christian world that provided the background of the Dionysian synthesis, part of the frame within which he placed his “Neoplatonized Origenism”. The nature of that phenomenon, and its relevance to the *EH-CD*, might perhaps best be gathered from the words of one of its harshest modern critics:

The victory of the Nicene faith was the victory of the priests over the faith of the Christian people... The thought that Christianity is the revelation of something incomprehensible became more and more familiar... has for its obverse side the adoration of the mystery... subjection to mystagogues.... The people must simply believe the Faith. They accordingly did not live in this Faith, but in that Christianity of the second rank... legends... amulets... the Mass regarded as magical...¹.

One need not agree with Harnack’s judgments here – although his is certainly a perspective often enough applied to Dionysius – but the great shift in Christian realities he is indicating was an undeniable, historical fact. The Nicean period corresponds to the so-called “Constantinian settlement”, that century of worldly triumph that saw the Church’s position altered from that of persecuted minority to the established faith – and prop – of the empire. This immense change led in turn to a massive influx of former pagans, to conversions on a truly imperial scale. It was evident that the Church would have somehow to adapt itself, its teaching and instruction, in order to accommodate the masses suddenly flocking to its doors. And adapt it did, both through the use of imperial machinery to define and enforce Christian dogmas (with the results so deplored by Harnack) and,

1. Harnack, *History of Dogma* IV, 166-167.

particularly relevant for us, through the elaboration of the catechumenate and use of the public worship as an instrument capable at once of impressing the new faithful with the splendor and seriousness of Christian belief², and of instructing them in the mystery so defined, of illustrating it. Even Lietzmann³, another critic, who saw in this process the entry into the Church of “the concrete, materialistic ideas of nature worship”, of “ritualism and a farrago of rites”, admits that the impression so gained by the neophytes did not entirely fail of its (generally beneficent) aims. More importantly, this era of victory, when the Church no longer had so much to fear from pagan competition, also saw “the full application of mystery terminology to the Christian sacraments”. It belongs, Nock continues, “essentially to the period of the Church’s triumph and can be explained as an answer to an internal rather than an external challenge”, a matter indeed “of diplomatic and pedagogic intent” consciously bent on giving “all possible dignity to Christian worship”⁴.

B. THE EXPRESSION, “MYSTAGOGY”, AND THE MYSTAGOGUES

The fourth century in short saw the birth of mystagogy as the, in part, deliberate attempt of the Church to meet the demands of its new imperial role. Let us pause a moment at the term itself, *μυσταγωγία*, in order to explore its various meanings. First of all, it denotes “initiation into a mystery”, i.e. into a “spiritual reality” at once hidden and manifest which requires an initiation⁵. In this initial and general sense, the term is scarcely limited to the fourth century and the imperial Church. Rather, it can be traced back to Alexandria, Clement, Origen, etc., to the very heart of the NT itself, and even to certain trends present in Hellenistic Judaism as represented by Philo. Then, too, the Christian faith found its first expression precisely in liturgical-sacramental rites and formulae: “Liturgy... was the first and initial layer in the Tradition of the Church”⁶. Neither the fourth century nor the *CD* represent anything new in this respect. Secondly, however, the more precise senses of the term which Bornert⁷ has given us, “the accomplishment of a sacred action” and “the oral or written explanation of the mystery hidden in the Scripture and celebrated in the Liturgy”, do indicate a new direction – or, at least, a novel emphasis. The first and general sense of the term need not refer to any specifically liturgical activity. The systems of an Origen, a Clement, or a Philo could be termed “mystagogies”, as, indeed, we have done and

2. For example, Eusebius’ panegyric in *Hist. Eccl.* X.iv.2-72 (SC 81-100); see also the examples given by Mango, *Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 3-44.

3. *History of the Early Church* IV, trans. Woolf (1961) 109.

4. A. Nock, “Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments” *Mnemosyne* IV (1952) 210-211.

5. R. Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la Divine Liturgie: du VIIe au XVe siècle* (Paris: 1966) 29.

6. Florovsky, “The Function of Tradition”, 84-85.

7. Bornert, 29.

for which we can find examples in Lampe using the word in both substantive and verbal forms⁸. The specific use of the second of the two senses, however, is a phenomenon that becomes standard via the new fourth-century emphasis on the Christian rites.

A new stress on sacred action in accomplishment and explication does not, however, give us the *CD* full-blown. As we noted in Chapter IV, scholars such as Stiglmayr, Roques, Boularand, together with still other such as Bornert⁹, have all pointed to the differences between the mystagogy presented in the *EH* and those which appear in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The latter, by such writers as Cyril of Jerusalem¹⁰, John Chrysostom¹¹, and Theodore of Mopsuestia¹², the exemplars whom we have chosen, all take the form of catechetical addresses. They are sermons addressed to the newly-baptized explaining the impressive ceremonies that the neophytes had just experienced for the first time. Dionysius, by contrast, writes to Timothy, already a presbyter or bishop, and presumably in want of a "stronger meat" than a basic introduction¹³. It is precisely that "strong meat", in the shape of a revised Origenist ἀναγωγή, that Dionysius set out to provide. Indeed, in the adaptation of that ἀναγωγή to the elaborate forms of Christian worship then prevailing, an approach made possible by the prior century's having supplied a general framework of interest in and explication of the sacraments, lay Dionysius' genius and originality (though, as we shall see from the "Messalians", even here he was not entirely original). So compelling a genius, indeed, that (and here we anticipate our conclusions) his synthesis has continued to influence the later Byzantine and Orthodox world down to our own day.

C. CONTINUITY OR DISCONTINUITY: THE *CORPUS DIONYSIACUM* VS. THE MYSTAGOGUES?

1. Dionysius' link with Antioch

While the Alexandrian-Origenist vision transposed onto the Christian Liturgy may be the heart of our thesis, it is also our general purpose to demonstrate Dionysius' basic continuity with the Christian tradition. To say therefore, as has one student of the question¹⁴, that the Areopagite has "no common ground with ideas of the Antiochene writers" appears to us an overstatement. As much an overstatement, in fact, as are perhaps many of the sharp contrasts scholars have drawn between the Alexandrian and Antiochene schools generally¹⁵. That the

8. Lampe, 890-891.

9. Bornert, 37.

10. *Catéchèses Mystagogiques* (SC 126, ed. Piédaguel, 1966).

11. *Huit Catéchèses Baptismales inédites* (SC 50, ed. Wenger, 1957).

12. *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, ed. and trans. Mingana (1933).

13. Thus Rorem's characterization of the *CD* as a kind of "handbook" for hierarchics. *Symbols*, 148-149.

14. S. C. Parsons, *The Historica Ecclesiastica of Germanus I*. MS B.Litt., (Oxford: 1978) 91.

15. For an article pointing out the dangers of too sharp a contrast, see H. de Lubac,

author of the *CD* should in the first place have felt drawn to the public worship of the Church as the vehicle of the ἀναγωγή given us in Christ bears witness in itself to a certain blurring of the frontiers. Nor, for that matter, should this be surprising, given that Cyril, Chrysostom, and Theodore all lived and worked in the same area, Syria-Palestine, as gave birth to the *CD*. Indeed, the mystagogy in Bornert's two specific senses may be said to have been an Antiochene invention. The same scholar goes in fact so far as to declare "les milieux antiochiens", in the persons of Chrysostom and – especially – Theodore, the birthplace "de la mystagogie allégorique:"¹⁶ – allegorical, that is, in the sense of assigning precise and detailed significance to liturgical rites in an organized and systematic manner¹⁷. In certain respects, then, Dionysius should be considered as one who simply inherited and further elaborated an already local tradition.

2. Typology vs. system

The objection arises immediately: even so, it cannot be denied that the Areopagite did not confine himself simply to commenting on the sacraments systematically. Instead, he made the liturgy serve a system, specifically (most will continue) the vertically-oriented, static scheme of late Neoplatonism. In contrast, it goes on, the Antiochenes spoke out of pastoral need while remaining rooted in an essentially Biblical vision of type and fulfillment. They spoke in terms of the Gospel of Christ redeeming the OT promises, and of the sacraments as recapitulating and realizing that fulfillment in the present while simultaneously anticipating the eschaton. Thus, for example, Cyril sees in Baptism the saving truth of which the OT passage through the Red Sea was the type¹⁸. The Church here represents the movement "from type to truth [ἀπὸ τοῦ τύπου εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν]"¹⁹. Chrysostom repeats the theme²⁰, adds other elements from the Exodus motif,²¹ and dwells on the person of Christ²². Theodore, typically, concentrates chiefly upon the Passion, and especially upon the anticipation of the eschatological gifts received in Baptism²³. Again, with the Eucharist, Chrysostom²⁴ stresses the Passion and the

"Typologie et allégorisme" *RSR* 34 (1947) 180-226. Relatedly, in reference to the question of sacramental realism, see H. Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy" *JTS* 2 (1951) 145-164.

16. Bornert, 79-80; see also the interesting speculations of Larsen, *Jamblique*, 450-454, connecting the exegetical schools of that Neoplatonist philosopher, which were in the vicinity of Antioch, with such Christian writers as, precisely, Theodore of Mopsuestia. And see Rist, "Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul". We shall shortly add another level to this interesting confluence, the idea of the "little church" of certain Syrian ascetics.

17. Parsons, 82.

18. Cyril, *Cat. Myst.* I.3 (SC 86).

19. *Ibid.* III.1 (120-121).

20. Chrysostom, *Huit Cat.* III.23-24 (SC 164-165).

21. *Ibid.* III.26 (166).

22. *Ibid.* III.17-18 (161-162).

23. Theodore, *Commentary IV* (Mingana, 53-54, 56, 65-55, and 68).

24. *Huit Cat.* III.12-21 (158-163).

blood of Christ fulfilling the paschal types and nourishing the Church. Theodore as well, reflecting on Hebrews, links the liturgy to the unique sacrifice of Christ's life and death²⁵. His vision of the sacrament as the recapitulation of Jesus' life is indeed particularly well developed²⁶. One might note finally the consistently ethical emphasis of writers such as Chrysostom and Theodore²⁷.

3. Seen and unseen

All this, the consistently "historical" thrust of the Antiochenes, does clearly differ from the ruling emphasis of the *CD* – although the former is not, as we have shown, entirely absent from the *EH*. Yet is the break in continuity really so absolute? We may note the frequent appearance, especially in Cyril and Theodore, of σύμβολον, τύπος, and related forms. Does the argument that these apply to historical events, the *Heilsgeschichte* in the one group, and to "Platonic ideas" in Dionysius really hold up? We have stressed repeatedly the difficulty of equating Dionysius' νοητά with those of the late Neoplatonists. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, too, recapitulates the saving acts of Christ, realizes the Incarnation, and anticipates the eschaton. And, surely, any simple dichotomy of Biblical *versus* Platonist must appear a little hazy to anyone familiar with the philosophical background of – particularly – Theodore of Mopsuestia's theology and, indeed, of the fifth-century Christological debates²⁸. Furthermore, any sort of "typology", whether "historical" or "Platonic", requires a certain "interdependence and interaction"²⁹ between type and antitype, symbol and symbolized – in short, a relationship with or participation in the unseen. Such language is certainly far from absent in the earlier mystagogues, whether in Chrysostom's appeals to the eye of faith "so that you pay heed not only to what is seen, but that you make the unseen visible from the seen"³⁰, or in Theodore's doctrine of the "Two Ages", that eschatological thrust "which rings through all Theodore's teaching about the sacraments"³¹, and that insists upon the presence of the unseen in and through the seen³². Finally, and not unrelated to the emphasis on the Kingdom present and to come, there is the theme of the celestial liturgy. We have noted the vital importance this has for the *EH-CH*, the Church's liturgy as reflecting and enabling our participation in the worship of Heaven. It is scarcely absent from Dionysius' predecessors. Daniélou in fact states "that this aspect is particularly dear to the

25. *Commentary V* (79ff esp.).

26. See esp. *Ibid.* V (88).

27. For Chrysostom, *Huit Cat.* V.20 (210) and VII.25 (241-242), and for Theodore, *Commentary VI* (109 and 117-118).

28. See, for example, Norris, *Manhood and Christ* (1963) and Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition* (1963) 175-491.

29. Parsons, 75.

30. *Huit Cat.* II.9 (138); also II.10-11 (138-139).

31. Mingana, "Preface", *Commentary*, xxiii.

32. Theodore, *Commentary II* (17-20).

tradition of Antioch”³³. Cyril mentions eight orders of angels concelebrating with us and making us sharer (κοινωνοί) in their praises³⁴. Chrysostom echoes him³⁵. Once again, though, it is Theodore in whom the theme is most developed, for whom our worship is very much stressed as a “likeness of the service of heaven”³⁶.

Summary: If the earlier mystagogues had different purposes (catechesis), and different emphases, historico-Biblical as opposed to the systematic vision of the Church’s public worship actually constituting the reality of our world and the core of God’s Providence and presence, it is still our view that the discontinuities between them and Dionysius are far from absolute. All were writing for the situation created by the new, imperial church and its highly elaborate, public cult. All speak in terms of the “participation” of visible realities in invisible ones. All see the sacraments as the anticipation of the world to come and thus as our present means of sharing in Heaven’s worship. Dionysius, coming later, is the inheritor of these different themes and, certainly, of the new reality of the Church in the post-Constantinian era that led to the development of liturgical commentaries out of – be it noted – elements inherent in Christianity from its very beginnings. To this inheritance he certainly added – better, synthesized it with – other elements of Greek and Syrian Christian tradition, but he could not have done so without these predecessors. It was the mystagogues and the new developments they represented who provided Dionysius with an essential element in the framework for his system. They gave him the place, the locus of the ἀναγωγή, and, in so far as he may have altered or shifted certain lines of emphasis in adopting their framework, it was an alteration that we believe to have been fully at one with the faith they shared in common, at the service of the Tradition they all claimed to represent, and lending greatly to its enrichment. His was, finally, a shift that had certain, unmistakable precedents in the ascetic tradition of Christian Syria, to which we turn next.

D. THE “MESSALIANS:” DIONYSIUS’ SOURCES IN THE SYRIAN ASCETIC TRADITION

1. “Singles” and “Sons of the Covenant”

No one knows much about Syriac-speaking Christianity before the fourth century and the writings of Aphraat of Persia (fl. 330’s-340’s) and Ephrem of Nisibis (d. 373). The mysterious *Odes of Solomon*, dated anywhere from the first to the third centuries, the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, and perhaps the *Gospel of Thomas* are nearly all that we have of these communities’ early literature. One feature that does emerge with singular force, especially in the latter two documents, is a remarkable stress on the ascetic life, an emphasis that continues on into the

33. Daniélou, *Les anges*, 88; see also esp. 85-89.

34. *Cat.* V.6 (154).

35. *Huit Cat.* VII.20 (238-239).

36. Commentary V (79); and Bornert in comment, 81-82.

writings of Aphraat, Ephrem, and beyond. At the center of this concern we find two technical phrases, the *ihidaya* or “single one” denoting the individual ascetic, and *bnai qeyama* or “sons of the covenant” indicating the ascetics as a group³⁷. While the questions and speculations around these *termini technici* are genuinely fascinating, in particular their possible connections to first century Palestine (perhaps tying in somehow with those roots in the Targums and OT *Peshitta* that we saw above in Evagrius’ use of the Sinai motif), we shall limit ourselves to a few observations concerning their bearing on the *CD* and Dionysius’ background.

The first term, *ihidaya*, derives from the Syriac for “one” (*hd*) and “appears five times in the [Syriac] New Testament to describe Jesus as God’s ‘single son’”, i.e., as the *μονογενής*³⁸. It thus carried the natural implication of a “special relationship” with Christ, the ascetic as having been particularly assimilated to the person of the Only-Begotten in a public ceremony of commitment³⁹. As discerned by R. Murray, two other senses flowed from the latter: the imitation of Christ’s celibacy and becoming “single minded”, simple, i.e., uniquely and exclusively focused on Jesus and the things of God⁴⁰. This concentration on deliberate simplification is in turn seen as restoring the ascetic to something like the status of primeval man, Adam before the Fall⁴¹. The ascetics’ single minded vigilance connects them with the eternal vigil, or liturgy we might say, of the angels, the “Watchers” of Syriac Christian parlance⁴². The Syrian holy man, *qaddisha*, thus emerges as the *pneumatophore* or Spirit-bearer *par excellence* in the communities of Oriental Christians, in other words quite what we saw in the *Vita Antonii* and Egyptian Desert tradition, save that this Syrian expression of the same idea may in fact be the older and original one⁴³.

37. See A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* Vol. I: *The Origins of Asceticism* (Louvain: 1958) 14-30 for speculations about the origins of this system in the Qumran community, and 98-108; G. Nedungatt, “The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-speaking Church” *OCP* 39 (1973) 191-215 and 419-444; Murray, *Symbols* 7-17; S. Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism” *Numen* XX (Leiden: 1973) 1-19; and for a recent and sober review of the literature, S. Griffith, “Monks, ‘Singles,’ and the ‘Sons of the Covenant’: Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology”, in *Eulogema: Studies in Honor of Robert Taft SJ* (Rome: 1993) 141-160.

38. Griffith, “‘Singles’”, 143-144.

39. *Ibid.* 143-145.

40. *Symbols*, 16. See also, for example, I. Dalmais, “La vie monastique comme ascèse vigiliale d’après saint Ephrem et les traditions liturgiques syriennes”, in *Liturgie, Conversion, et Vie Monastique*, Sub. 48 of *EphL* (1989) 73-86, esp. 77 on *hd - ihidaya* as meaning “to be one:” “C’est bien là... le sens fondamental du *monachos*: celui qui est un, unique, unifié... l’idéal primitif du *μοναχός* a des attaches profondes avec cette vertu judéo-chrétienne de ‘simplicité’ (ἀπλότης)”.
 41. See Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism”, 12.
 42. Dalmais, “Vie monastique”, 74-75.
 43. Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism”, 10-11 and 18. For Syria as the original home of the “man of God” in Christianity, see H. Drijvers, “Die Legende des heiligen Alexius und der Typus des Gottesmannes im syrischen Christentum”, in *TSA* 187-217, and esp. his article “Hellenistic and Oriental Origins” in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London: 1981) 25-33.

These elements – celibacy, oneness, simplicity (ἀπλότης), concentration, together with the tie to the angels and the effective claim to spiritual authority – are all to the fore in Dionysius’ handling of the monks in *EH VI* and *Epistle VIII*⁴⁴. He affirms all of them, save the last for which he makes special provision and warning. He calls the monks μοναχοί, and it seems clear to us that he felt he could do so without any fear of obvious anachronism because of the already ancient tradition of the Syrian *ihidaya*⁴⁵. The monks are called to a state of celibacy, “complete purity”⁴⁶, and their life is to be “simple [lit. “without parts”, ἀμέριστος] and uniform”, “being made one in deiform unity [μονὰς] and God-loving perfection”⁴⁷. Dionysius concludes the chapter by reflecting on the likeness of our hierarchy to the heavenly one, and includes a final paragraph on the purified orders among the angels⁴⁸. All the salient and traditional elements of the *ihidaya* are therefore present. What sets the *EH*’s portrayal of the monk apart, however, is the Areopagite’s insistence on the role of the ordained clergy, in particular of the hierarchs, as the ascetics’ guides and directors⁴⁹. The monks are not leaders, he repeats, but called to be followers, and obedient ones at that.

We shall return shortly to the tensions that clearly underlie this insistence. For now, though, we would like to turn to the other technical term denoting Syrian ascetics, the *bnai qeyama*. The key term in the latter is the Syriac root, *qwm*, meaning “to rise” or “stand”. S. Griffith has noted a number of possible associations with the latter that go beyond the most commonly accepted one of “covenant”. These include the idea of resurrection (thus “sons of the Resurrection”), of community with the “standing ones” or “watchers” (the angels), or simply of a “station” or “status” beyond the normal requirements of the community of believers⁵⁰. Once again Dionysius appears at one point or another to reflect each of these possible renderings. In *DN I.4*’s passage on the eschaton there may be an echo of the allusion to the resurrection in the phrase, *bnai qeyama*, when the relevant section concludes by noting that “we shall be sons of God who are sons of the Resurrection [υἱοὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ὄντες]”⁵¹. Back in *EH VI* we find the Areopagite declaring that the “monastic taxis” is not to be leader of others, but to

44. Louth, *Denys*, 70, has touched on the Syrian connection here, while R. Roques, in “Éléments pour une théologie de l’état monastique selon Denys l’Aréopagite” *TVM* 283-314, has described Dionysius’ understanding of the monk very much in the same terms, but quite without reference to its background in Christian Syria.

45. The one other expression Dionysius uses for the ascetics is θεραπευταί, a clear borrowing from another first-century writer, Philo, as pointed out by the Scholiast, *PG IV* 528A, and at much greater length by Pachymeres, *PG III* 433A-436C, who quotes the relevant passages from Philo at length.

46. *EH VI.1.3* 532D (116:9).

47. *Ibid.* 533A (116:16-17), also *VI.1.2* 533D (118:2-3).

48. *VI.3.5* 536D-7A (119:12-15) and *VI.3.6* 537A-C (119:16-120:7).

49. See *VI.1.3* 532D (116:11-14) and *3.1* 533C (117:18-22).

50. “Monks, ‘Singles’”, 148-153 and 158-160.

51. *DN I.4* 592C (115:4-5).

“remain [lit. “stand”] in itself in a unified and holy standing [or “station”, στάσις]”⁵². Finally, in the following paragraph, he notes that the monks are called to a more perfectly unified life, even to a denial of fantasy (recall Evagrius’ struggle against the λογισμοί), than the rest of the baptized laity, i.e., precisely to a higher station or status⁵³.

The Scholiast’s comment on the last citation leads us to Dionysius’ emphasis on the leading role of the ordained clergy. Unlike the Areopagite’s insistence on the rigors of monastic withdrawal, the commentator observes, “those Messalians” observe a limited asceticism of three years and then do whatever they want⁵⁴. With “Messalianism” (from the Syriac “to pray”) we arrive at the native Syrian equivalent to those tensions between the holy man and the Church hierarchy, between personal charisma and sacramental authority, that we saw alluded to in the stories of the Egyptian monks. Syria, indeed, appears to have been the homeland of these tensions⁵⁵. We shall not attempt to elucidate the ups and downs and scholarly confusions of the Messalian controversy, where until recently there has been much smoke and little light⁵⁶. We would like, though, to underline the following four points: 1) the controversy stemmed from and continued to embroil the Syrian East from the late fourth through at least the fifth centuries; 2) it must clearly have featured certain extreme claims to charismatic authority (to which we shall return momentarily), but 3) the same extremism prompted a response, beginning in the late fourth century, from within the ascetic community itself; and 4) Dionysius himself is to be placed within both the swirl of controversy and the continuum of response that it had begun to elicit over a century before the apparition of the *CD*.

That Dionysius was consciously involved in the controversy is affirmed by a second clue in *EH* VI on the monks, as well as in his *Ep.* VIII to the turbulent Demophilus. This second clue – second in addition to the Scholiast’s reference to Messalianism – comes at the end of *EH* VI.1.3. The divine ordinance (θεσμοθεσία) has expressly given a special consecrating invocation to the monks, i.e., that service of monastic consecration that we saw above is probably Dionysius’ own invention⁵⁷. The term ordinance, with its reference to the divine law (θεσμός)

52. 533C (117:19-20).

53. VI.3.2 533D (117:23-118:3).

54. *PG* IV 169D-172A. Note also the long passage vs. Origen, Evagrius, and their putative angelism and *apocatastasis*, that accompanies Dionysius’ comment on the angels in *EH* VI.3.6: *PG* IV 172C-173B.

55. See for example Vööbus, *Hist. of Asc.* I:3-30, as well as the articles cited above by Brock and Drijvers esp.

56. For light, see the study by C. Stewart, “*Working the Earth of the Heart*”: *The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to A.D. 431* (Oxford/NY: 1991). We follow Stewart, particularly in his conclusions, 234-240, that resolve most of the confusion into a case of cross-cultural miscommunication: Syriac idioms in translation meeting the incomprehending disapproval of Greek ecclesiastics.

57. 533A (116:19-20).

of hierarchy that we sketched in our chapter II above, also echoes one of the earliest critiques of Messalianism. At the close of the fourth century, Epiphanius of Salamis had complained that the ascetic wild men were quite without θεσμός and νομοθεσία, “law and order” we might say⁵⁸. Dionysius is quite as clearly interested in providing them with just that.

Before turning to our points three and four above, we might then take a moment in this section’s conclusion to note the nature of the disturbances that Dionysius was facing. A. Vööbus has provided us with a series of portraits of noted Syrian ascetic heroes of the fourth and fifth centuries. We underline in particular his picture of Alexander Akoimetos (d. 432)⁵⁹. The latter was a canonized saint whose way of life appears even in his official *Life* to have been characterized by continual struggles with church authorities, accusations of “Messalianism”, and an emphasis on his own inspiration by the Spirit. As early as the second or third century *Acts of Judas Thomas*, according to the following passage quoted by Vööbus, we note one theme that Dionysius approves, and a second that his exchange with Demophilus was designed to counter:

Blessed are the bodies of the holy ones which are worthy to become clear temples [lit. “houses”] that the Christ may dwell in them. Blessed are you, holy ones, for you are empowered to forgive sins⁶⁰.

The very antiquity of this view, perhaps even including the idea that the ascetic life “makes the anchorites not only members of the Church, but actually makes them priests”⁶¹, rooted as it was in “certain ideas which went back to... immemorial traditions”⁶², might well point to a good reason why Dionysius would have wanted to pick a pen name from the origins of Christianity: in order to offer a countervailing antiquity to very old ideas in the Syrian Christian milieu. That these ideas were also very much alive at the time of the *CD*’s composition is no less evident. Once again we go to Vööbus while at the same recalling both the precise “geographical” position allotted the monks in Dionysius’ *Ep. VIII* (just outside the “gates of the sanctuary” but closer to it than the rest of the laity)⁶³, and Demophilus’ having snatched up the consecrated gifts (τὰ ἅγια) in order to guard them⁶⁴. Vööbus points to canons issued under the authority of Rabbula of Edessa (d. 436), one of which forbids the ascetics “to ascend the raised floor of the altar”⁶⁵, while another declares that “no one of the brothers, if he is not a priest,

58. *Panarion* 80.3.3 cited by Stewart, “Working”, 18-20.

59. Vööbus, *Hist. of Asc.* II:185-195.

60. *Ibid.* I:96, note 133.

61. *Ibid.* II.10.

62. *Ibid.* 131.

63. 1088D-1089A (176:12-177:1 and 177:5-8).

64. 1088B and D (175:9-13 and 176:9-12).

65. *Hist. of Asc.* II:334, citing Canon 58 of Rabbula.

shall dare give the Eucharist”⁶⁶. Finally, the same scholar observes that “wherever an enumeration of the different ranks of the members of the congregation appears, the *qeïama* is always placed behind the deacons”⁶⁷. Do we not find in this a corroboration of the physical ordering of the congregation and celebrants that Dionysius insists upon? In any case, the Messalian issue was still aboil during the period up to the composition of the *CD*, and indeed appears to have been around for some time afterwards⁶⁸.

At the same time as Dionysius was responding to a movement originating in Syrian asceticism, he was also taking from its literature in order to frame his reply both to the challenges that it posed to Church order, and to the problems of Evagrian Origenism. As we shall see, perhaps the key text for this reply comes from the *Macarian Homilies*, but the latter were anticipated in important ways – and in ways that reflect as well on other aspects of Dionysius’ thought – by the greatest of Syriac writers, Ephrem of Nisibis.

E. EPHREM SYRUS: CHRIST HIDDEN AND REVEALED, AND THE MOUNTAIN OF PARADISE.

1. Hidden and revealed: the Ephremian dialectic

Perhaps the reason that no one, until very recently, has even glanced at Ephrem Syrus (d. 373) as a possible source for the *Corpus Areopagiticum* is the obvious fact that the great Christian poet of the fourth century speaks in an entirely different idiom, both literally and figuratively, than the mysterious Dionysius⁶⁹. Ephrem eschews the philosophers as a poison and cleaves instead to scriptural expressions and images. Yet in his play of Biblical images we in fact find something very close to the Dionysian dialectic⁷⁰. As in the first two of the seven points outlined at the end of our chapter V above, Ephrem’s God is simultaneously hidden and revealed. He is hidden to those who would search him out by their own powers, but revealed to the worshipper: “He is revealed in his goodness, concealed in his essence. Instead of his Majesty, seek his goodness...

66. *Ibid.* 182, citing Canon 20. See also *Ibid.* I:276, citing Canon 13 of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, 410 A.D., on the same issue.

67. *Ibid.* 207.

68. See Stewart, “Working”, 12-51, and the lists of Messalian propositions compiled as late as John of Damascus, 52-53. The issue continued, in fact, up to the end of the Byzantine era. See, for example, J. Gouillard for the tenth through twelfth centuries, “Quatre procès de mystique à Byzance (vers 960-1143)” *REB* 36 (1978) 5-81, and the Hesychast controversy of the fourteenth, as evidenced in the reaction against accusations of Messalianism in the *Hagioritic Tome*, PG CL 1225-1231.

69. The recent exceptions include M. Schmidt, “Die Augensymbolik bei Ephrem und Parallelen in der deutschen Mystik”, *TSA*, 285; A. Louth in *Denys* 79-81, focusing especially on Ephrem’s *de fide* 31; and S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: the Spiritual World View of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Kalamazoo: 1992) 147 and 180, note 6.

70. Indeed, it is precisely as “dialectic” that A. de Halleux characterizes Ephrem’s theology, “Mar Ephrem théologien” *ParO* IV:1-2 (1973) 47.

His treasure is open, himself is withdrawn”⁷¹. Ephrem’s theology of the divine names, as R. Murray remarks, “is developed between apophatic and cataphatic poles”⁷². God’s being or essence is permanently and absolutely concealed, but “his names indicate his virtues”, or as above, his “goodness” – i.e., something very much like Dionysius’ powers or energies, or the name of the Good, as distinct from the hidden superessence⁷³. As Ephrem remarks in a phrase that reminds us of the *MT*, the human mind’s power is entirely inadequate to the divine being: “It is too short for your mountain”⁷⁴. This is the “secret and strong light whose glistening the angels cannot look upon”⁷⁵, and whose “ray” – recall again Dionysius’ language – “slips away at all times” from investigation and “blinds” human vision⁷⁶.

Yet Ephrem’s transcendent and inaccessible God has, even in the act of creation, filled the world “with his traces, inadequate yet valid pointers to himself”⁷⁷. The Hidden One has deigned to be revealed in his “symbols [*raze*]” or “types [*tupse*]”, as in the following passage from *de Virginitate*:

In any place if you look his symbol is there, and when you read, you will find his types. For by him were created all creatures, and he engraved his symbols upon his possessions. When he created the world, he gazed at it and adorned it with his images. Streams of his symbols opened, flowed and poured forth⁷⁸.

This act of condescension is first of all a product of the divine will, distinct in a sense from the hidden and unchanging essence of divinity. The latter is one and simple, but via the former God “enters into multiplicity”⁷⁹. Again we find a feature of Ephrem’s thought that resonates with Dionysius. Secondly, we note the three different words appearing in the passage just quoted: symbol, type, and image (*dmuta*). Ephrem has a collection of still other terms, including “name [*šma*]” itself, all of which denote roughly the same thing: God’s mercy of self-

71. *Hymns on Faith* (henceforth *de fide*) 72:10-11. English from *Hymns on Faith*, trans. J. B. Morris (London: 1847) 337; Syriac in *CSCO* 154:193-194.

72. “The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem’s Theology” *ParO* 6-7 (1975-76) 10-11. See also M. Schmidt’s specific reference in this context to Dionysius and the *MT*: “Der Sache ist hier [in Ephrem] nicht anders als die Negative Theologie angesprochen, wie sie später die Schriften des Ps.-Dionysius vertreten”. In “Augensymbolik”, 285.

73. *De virginitate* 26.13. Translated by K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (NY: 1989) 389.

74. *De nativitate* 21.24 (McVey 178); printed in Syriac as *de fide* IV.11, *CSCO* 154:10-14.

75. *De fide* 52.9, *CSCO* 154:5-8 (Morris 27).

76. *De vir.* 52.5 (McVey 462).

77. Murray, “Symbolism in Ephrem”, 2.

78. *De vir.* 20 (McVey 348-349).

79. De Halleux, “Mar Ephrem théologien”, 46, citing esp. *Carmen de Nis.* 3.3; 48.7; *de fide* 11.9; 17.5; 50.5; *de haeresibus* 32.8-9; 33.6 and, for the will/essence distinction, *de Eccl.* 21.3; *de fide* 31.2-3 and 8-10; 32.14; and *de haer.* 30.1-4; 33.1-9; and 36.5-6.

disclosure, his “veiled mode of manifestation”, such that the name (or type, symbol, etc.) in question “reveals... not the essence, but rather only the existence, the reality”⁸⁰. We are inevitably reminded of the rough equivalence that Dionysius maintains among his different terms, eg. σύμβολον, τύπος, εἰκών, ὄνομα, ἄγαλμα, ὁμοίωμα, etc. Thus, thirdly and just as with the *CD* later on, Ephrem’s “symbols” etc. are a true making visible of the invisible God:

For him who would tell of it [i.e., divinity] there is no other means but to use the names of things that are visible.... For the Creator... has clothed his majesty in terms that we can understand⁸¹.

They are, in short, sacramental, and like the sacraments (and, indeed, the human being in communion with God), carry in their outward and manifest form the presence of the hidden divinity. As Ephrem remarks in *de fide* 20, in an intimation of the mystical union:

In one body are both prayer and faith, hidden and visible, for the Hidden One and also for the visible. Hidden prayer for the hidden ear, and faith for the visible ears. Our prayer is as it were a secret taste in the middle of our body⁸².

This is an indwelling of the transcendent God in his symbols, just as he indwells his creature, the sanctified human being.

We would like to add a fourth and final point regarding Ephrem’s dialectic of hidden and revealed, and its kinship with the *CD*. The latter’s love of contradiction, of mutual antitheses happily embraced, was singled out recently by R. Mortley as quite peculiar, “not a familiar part of Neoplatonism”, and in fact taking the Areopagite “closer to the Gnostics”⁸³. Although Dionysius also shares with Proclus the notion of “certain names as given from above”, he shows – unlike the latter – “no attempt to make a place for human discourse” regarding the ultimate things of God⁸⁴. Enthusiasm for contradiction is most obvious in the Dionysian triadology, where he takes “the step of assuming the contradiction... [and] simply

80. Schmidt, “Augensymbolik”, 279. We recall Dionysius in *Ep. IX* on the ὑπαρχῆς. For a fuller discussion of *raza*, *ma*, *tupsa*, etc., see E. Beck, “Zur Terminologie von Ephräms Bildtheologie”, in *TSA*, 239-277, as well as his earlier article, “Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephrem” *OC* 42 (1958) 19-40. The most complete discussion is perhaps that of T. Bon Mansour, *La pensée symbolique de saint Ephrem le syrien* (Kaslik, Liban: 1988) esp. 23-120.

81. *Hymn de paradiso* XI.5, *CSCO* 174, 47:11-16. English, S. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood NY: 1990) 155. Recall Dionysius esp. in *CH* I.3 and *DN* I.4. See also *de fide* 20.16 for the role of love, and 33.3 for the hidden/revealed dialectic, as well as Beck, “Symbolum-mysterium”, 28.

82. *De fide* 20:10-11, *CSCO* 154 75:15-19 (Morris 173). For the paradox of darkness and light in this context, cf. *de nat.* II.74, *CSCO* 186:9 (McVey 72).

83. *Word to Silence* II, 239 and 241.

84. *Ibid.* 247.

asserts both propositions simultaneously”⁸⁵. Yet it turns out that this approach is scarcely unique either to Gnosticism or to the Areopagite. In addition to Gregory of Nazianzus, whom we discussed above in chapter VII, Ephrem is perhaps even more the prince of antithetical discourse – for example: “His nature is hidden, yet revealed, though it is entirely hidden”⁸⁶. This feature is so marked in him that E. Beck has even spoken of an “agnostic tendency” in his thought⁸⁷. Above all, this tendency applies to his thinking on the Trinity⁸⁸. Just as clear for both Ephrem and Dionysius is the fact that the names, symbols, etc. are, precisely, given. They possess a certain ontological reality and worth that is accorded them by the grace of divine self-disclosure, while at the same time they open onto God’s presence and so point beyond themselves to his mystery⁸⁹. For both writers, in sum, “human existence and its salvation is inextricably tied to symbols”⁹⁰. The question of salvation leads us on to Ephrem’s doctrine of Christ, who is the “reservoir of all symbols”⁹¹.

2. Christ: the point of meeting

Throughout this section we shall be keeping in mind the Christological passages in the *CD*, and of the latter perhaps most especially *Ep.* III and IV, together with *DN* I.4. As with Dionysius, Ephrem’s Christ is the mystery (*raza*) *par excellence*, the supreme symbol and validation of all symbols⁹². Recalling our points three and four from chapter V above, Jesus is the point where all lines converge: darkness and light, heaven and earth, the natural symbols implanted in the creation and the types of the Old Testament, Paradise and the Kingdom to come, God and man⁹³. He is the place of meeting, as Ephrem observes in *de nat.* 1, using Moses and Elijah:

Moses and Elijah looked for him; the humble one (Moses) ascended *from* the depths; and the zealous one (Elijah) came down from the height, and

85. *Ibid.* 239.

86. *De fide* 33.3, *CSCO* 154:110 (Morris 211).

87. E. Beck, “Die zwei Paradoxen des Glaubens bei Ephräm”, in *TAV*, 175.

88. *Ibid.* and also “Zur Terminologie”, 239.

89. Thus cf. Murray, “Theory of Symbolism”, 15-16, on Ephrem’s symbols as working “heuristically, not apodictically”, and the same author, *Symbols*, 166, pointing to the Syrian father’s later echoes in “classical Byzantine iconographical theory” – the latter being a development for which Dionysius, too, made obvious and frequently noted contributions.

90. Schmidt, “Augensymbolik”, 278.

91. *De vir.* 20:11 (McVey 348).

92 See Beck, “Symbolum-Mysterium”, 22, as well as I. Dalmais, “Raza et Sacrament”, in *Rituals: Mélanges offerts à Pierre-Marie Guy, O.P.* (Paris: 1990) 177, and P. Youssif, “Symbolisme christologique dans la Bible et dans la nature selon saint Ephrem de Nisibe” *ParO* 8 (1977-78) 5-66, esp. 24, 46, and 52.

93. See *de vir.* 9.210 (McVey 302) for Christ as the confluence of the streams of symbols, and also the chart that Murray provides in “The Symbolism of Ephrem”, 7.

they saw the Son in the middle⁹⁴.

Christ is the revelation and place of the Hidden One, the Father: "By his Son is the Essence seen which cannot be seen"⁹⁵. As suggested by the meeting of Moses and Elijah before Christ, Ephrem sees in the Transfiguration an especial confirmation of the Lord's mystery:

He came down and veiled his face with a veil of flesh.... He gleamed a little on the Mount, trembling and aghast were those three whom the Apostle accounted pillars. He granted them a sight of his hidden glory commensurate with their strength⁹⁶.

Again, contrasting the revelation in Christ with the theophany on Sinai where the "Hidden One did not clothe himself with a likeness", he writes:

Gaze then on him [and see] that it was he, and yet it was not he; for the Real One veiled himself with an image; his fulness was found within it, his brightness was covered over with our form⁹⁷.

The dialectic of hidden and revealed thus, as in the *CD's Epistle III*, reaches its climax and peak of paradox in Christ:

Who, Lord, can gaze on thy invisibleness which came down to a visible state, and thy concealedness which came to the light and to manifestation, and thy retiredness come forth to boundless openness?⁹⁸

The "hidden light" has descended, and its "beauty shone forth from a body"⁹⁹. "Blessed is he", Ephrem concludes, "who is [both] hidden and revealed in his actions"¹⁰⁰, and "who made our body a tabernacle for his hiddenness"¹⁰¹.

The meeting of transcendence and immanence, infinity and physical limit, therefore takes place in the body of Jesus: "the greater than measure... became immeasurably small"¹⁰². He is the "hidden bridge"¹⁰³, the "star of light that shone forth suddenly"¹⁰⁴ – and we note in that use of "suddenly" (*men shel*) in connection with the Incarnation, an echo of our discussion of the Dionysian ἐξαίφ

94. *CSCO* 186:5 (McVey 68). Recall Moses' ascent in *MT I.3*.

95. *De fide* 6.2, *CSCO* 154:25.

96. *De fide* 7.3, *CSCO* 154:92 (Morris 189).

97. *De fide* 26.13, *CSCO* 154:92 (Morris 189).

98. *De fide* 51.2, *CSCO* 154:158 (Morris 269).

99. *De nat.* 1.6, *CSCO* 186:2 (McVey 64). See also, for example, *de fide* 19.7-8, *CSCO* 154:73 (Morris 171), and *de nat.* 3.4-5, *CSCO* 186:21 (McVey 83).

100. *De nat.* 23.1, *CSCO* 186:117 (McVey 187).

101. *Ibid.* 3.7, *CSCO* 186:21 (McVey 84).

102. *Ibid.* 21.13, *CSCO* 186:107 (McVey 176).

103. *De fide* 22.17, *CSCO* 154:30-31 (Morris 130).

104. *De nat.* 6.7, *CSCO* 186:52 (McVey 112).

νης. Christ joins divinity and humanity: “He mingled the natures like pigments and an image [*tseima* – thus εἰκών or ἄγαλμα for Dionysius] came into being: the God-man [*‘lh br ‘n*]”¹⁰⁵. He is the true εἰκών, the θεάνθρωπος. It is difficult not to recall Dionysius’ *Epistle* IV here. Indeed, in Ephrem’s understanding of the body of Christ we find a virtual summary of the whole *CD*: hidden/revealed, tabernacle, temple, light, transfiguration, the “sudden”, and finally the God-man. It all meets here, as in the *CD*’s *Epistle* III. And, too, like the *CD*, Christ’s body for Ephrem points toward the mystery of Church.

Ephrem’s ecclesiological doctrine is, admittedly, only “implicit”, but the argument implied in what we have cited above could, in Murray’s judgment, “be summed up by saying that the whole dispensation of salvation has its source in the human body of Christ... [given] us in the sacraments (“in mystery”, or *braz*)... to incorporate us in him in the Church”¹⁰⁶. Thus Ephrem will draw the connection between Christ’s glorified body and the glory awaiting faithful believers in language that, once more, recalls the notes of the Transfiguration and of veils familiar to us from the *CD*:

The firstborn was clothed in the body: it was the veil of his glory. The immortal Bridegroom will shine forth in this robe. The guests in their robes will be like that robe of his; [their] bodies, their garments will shine¹⁰⁷.

Through Jesus’ body, the Christian is initiated into the “languages” of the angels and of the Godhead (and note the implied hierarchy of being in the following):

Our language is foreign to the voice of animals, the language of the watchers to every language. The silence in which the Father speaks to his Son is foreign [even] to the watchers. O, his kindness! As he puts on all forms for us to see, as he put on all voices, in order to teach us his nature is one, it can be seen; his silence is one, it can be heard¹⁰⁸.

The body of the Lord is the place, τόπος, of the Incomprehensible who is “wholly light”, the “great mystery”¹⁰⁹. Again, it is the temple and possibility of the believer’s becoming, in his or her turn, God’ “royal palace”¹¹⁰. Thus it is to the communication of Christ in the sacraments that we shall turn next and, following that, to the Christian as microcosm and temple.

3. The Sacraments: water, bread and wine, and oil

The three we list above as Ephrem’s sacraments, i.e., Baptism, Eucharist and

105. *Ibid.* 8.2, 186:59 (McVey 119).

106. *Symbols*, 70. See also *Ibid.* 74, and Schmidt, “Augensymbolik”, 282.

107. *Carm. Nis.* 43.20-21, *CSCO* 240:45; quoted by Murray, *Symbols*, 76.

108. *De fide* 11:7-9, *CSCO* 154:54; quoted by Murray, “Symbolism in St. Ephrem”, 18.

109. *De fide* 81, *CSCO* 154:248-9 (Morris 89).

110. *De vir.* 1.2 (McVey 262).

Anointing, correspond first of all to the first triad of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. Both the poet and the Areopagite are in harmony thus with a Syrian tradition of long standing¹¹¹.

Secondly, for Ephrem as for Dionysius the sacraments, and the Church which they express and realize, stand at a midway point between the symbols or types of the Old Testament and the reality (*ῥ'ara*) of the eschatological Kingdom: "The Church is therefore itself symbolic of the kingdom"¹¹². The former communicates the latter's truth through the medium of the sacramental symbols, and this "*mise en œuvre*" of the divine condescension or pedagogy (Dionysius would say *πρόνοια* or *πρόοδος*, with special reference to the Incarnation) enables human beings on this side of the eschaton to "commune in the intangible transcendence"¹¹³. We are enabled to "grasp the divine through our sensible perceptions"¹¹⁴. With respect to these two points we find that Ephrem and Dionysius are in rough harmony with each other. The affinities are clear, even if the terminology differs. In what follows we shall limit ourselves to sketching certain of the other points regarding the sacraments that both men share.

Ephrem on Baptism need not detain us long. As with this sacrament's treatment in *EH II*, there is nothing particularly new or startling with regard to the Biblical and patristic tradition obtaining throughout the Christian world. The font is the "womb that gives birth to royal sons" who, on having been born, are "nourished and educated by the altar"¹¹⁵. The connection between Baptism and Eucharist that we saw in *EH II*, where the neophyte was immediately communicated, is underlined by Ephrem in a way that recalls the argument in favor of infant communion and baptism that Dionysius put forward in *EH VII*: "O to the babes who immediately eat perfect bread instead of milk!"¹¹⁶ Baptism as a "putting on of Christ" is underlined by Ephrem's use of the traditional (and pre-Christian, Jewish) imagery of the "robe of glory", lost by Adam and regained in Christ¹¹⁷. One of Ephrem's summary statements of this exchange, with an echo of the hidden/revealed tension, does recall Dionysian themes: "You put on our visible body; let us put on your hidden power. Our body became your garment; your Spirit became our robe"¹¹⁸.

The parallels – or at least affinities – between the two writers thicken considerably when we approach the Eucharist. The latter is first of all for Ephrem, as for Dionysius and the tradition generally, the chief and sum of all the

111. See Strothmann, *Myronweihe* esp. xliii ff.

112. Murray, *Symbols*, 243-244.

113. Youssif, "L'Eucharistie", *TAV*, 244.

114. *Ibid.* 238.

115. *De vir.* 7.7-8 (McVey 294-295).

116. *Ibid.* (McVey 295).

117. See S. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition", in *TSA*, 11-38, esp. 18.

118. *De nat.* 22.39, *CSCO* 186:116 (McVey 185).

sacraments, the *raza* without qualification¹¹⁹. Secondly, and relatedly, the Eucharist is therefore that event within the life of the Church and of the Christian where the dialectic of hidden and revealed, of inward and outward realities, discovers its supreme expression. Put briefly, and recalling our discussion in chapter IV of the ὑπ' ὀψιν in *EH* III, the Eucharist is that point in the Church's worship and Christian practice where, more than on any other occasion, the invisible becomes visible:

In you, O room of the [Last] Supper, was the hidden mystery [*raza kasya*] revealed through the visible bread that he [Christ] gave to them [the Apostles]¹²⁰.

The mystery of the hidden God's revelation is concentrated here. Indeed, Ephrem will declare that Christ's divinity is more evident in the Eucharistic bread that even in his body when he walked in Palestine:

Let bread and the mind portray you. Dwell in bread and in those who eat it. In hidden and revealed [form] let your church see you as [does] the one who bore you [i.e., Mary]... Your bread is far more honorable than your body. For even the unbelievers saw your body, but they do not see your living bread¹²¹.

The Eucharist as supreme theophany leads us, thirdly, to Ephrem's use of the OT theophanies in connection with the sacrament, and thus to further affinities with the *CD*. "The Godhead of Christ", notes P. Youssif, "is present in the Eucharist as on Mt. Sinai. The Tabernacle is a symbol of the Church where the All-Holy One dwells. The Eucharistic bread is a vestment of Christ's just as the priestly vestments [of the OT]"¹²². This recalls of course our discussion of the *MT* at the beginning of chapter IV above. Likewise, *CH* XIII's interest in Isaiah's vision is paralleled by Ephrem's exploitation of Isaiah 6 for Eucharistic imagery, both with regard to the coal that the prophet receives, and to the locus of his experience in the Jerusalem temple¹²³. The recollection of the temple takes us to

119. See Beck, "Symbolum-mysterium", 26, and Dalmis, "Raza", 173.

120. From *Hymni de crucifix*. 3.15, cited by Beck, "Symbolum-mysterium", 38. See also *de vir*. 35:12 (McVey 419): "The priests of the Church grasp you in their hands, the Bread of Life that came down and was mingled with the senses".

121. *De nat*. 16.4-6, *CSCO* 186:83-4 (McVey 149-50). Note the mind's involvement and invisibility to the unbeliever, and recall Dionysius on the holy things as invisible (ἀθέατος) to the profane – whose sight is obscured by the passions – in *EH* III.3.7 436C (87:6-7). See also McVey's comment, *Ibid*. 357: "For believers after the time of the Incarnation the Eucharist and the mind become the outward and inward ways".

122. P. Youssif, "Typologie und Eucharistie bei Ephrem und Thomas von Aquin", in *TSA*, 88; citing Ephrem's Hymns extant only in Armenian, 47.18 and 48.4-5, as well as *Hymni de eccl*. 42:1.

123. See *Ibid*. 89-90, citing *Comm. in Diat*. 1.25; *de nat*. 6.13, 11.5, and 22.14.

his use of the imagery of veils or curtains also familiar to us from the *CD*. As Christ's physical body was to his divinity, so is the Eucharistic bread: "The body was the veil of your splendor... and the bread is the veil of the fire that indwells it"¹²⁴.

If the bread of holy communion is the veil of Christ's divinity, this sacrament is also and fourthly the moment of recognition – for Dionysius the ἐπίγνωσις – of his presence and Godhead. As Ephrem puts it, in the context of Christ's appearance to Cleopas and friend in Luke 24:

To make them perfect [recall Dionysius' τελείωσις]... you tore the veil with the bread. Your brightness will be revealed completely at the end when the veil will be lifted from all¹²⁵.

Here we arrive at something that closely approaches Dionysius' confession of the Eucharist as his own moment of illumination in *EH* III.1, as well as the following: the ἐπιγνώσκω of *EH* III.3.15; the experience of the divine presence in *MT* I.3; and perhaps most explicitly, the "suddenly" of *Ep.* III wherein we saw all the Dionysian lines converge. The Eucharist is both veil and, for those prepared, the tearing of the veil, the "instant" of recognition. Nor is the passage just quoted an isolated instance in Ephrem. He returns to Luke 24 in his *Hymns on Paradise* and, moreover, avails himself a second time of the specific Syriac equivalent of the Greek ἐξαίφνης, *men shel*:

When the disciples' eyes were held closed, bread too was the key whereby their eyes were opened to recognize the Omniscient: darkened eyes beheld a vision of joy and were suddenly [*men shel*] filled with happiness¹²⁶.

It is difficult not to see more than merely an affinity with the *CD* in this use of the "sudden" in combination with the notes of darkness/light and "recognition", and all of it in the context of the Eucharist. We seem to have evidence, at the very least, of a common tradition of interpretation regarding the NT ἐξαίφνης – recall the latter's appearance in Luke 2 and Ephrem's linking of it above with the star of Bethlehem and the Incarnation.

124. *De fide* 19.2-3, *CSCO* 154:21 cited by F. Graffin, "L'Eucharistie chez St. Ephrem" *ParO* IV.1-2 (1973) 104. See also *Ibid.* 114.

125. *De vir.* 36.21 (McVey 421).

126. *De parad.* 15.4, *CSCO* 174:63. Translation by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 183. We have altered Brock's rendering of *kmirtheh* from "saddened" to "darkened", and his "instantly" to "suddenly". These are also the renderings of R. Lavenant, *Hymnes sur Paradis*, *SC* 137, 188: "enténébrés" and "soudain". The transition from dark to light is thus also underlined, and we are led to recall the similar darkness/light exchange in Dionysius' *Epistles* I-V. We must acknowledge our gratitude to M. Schmidt for directing us to the importance of Ephrem's "sudden" in this passage (and to its use a second time in the *Paradise Hymns* to which we shall return below): "Alttestamentliche Typologien in den Paradieshymnen von Ephräm dem Syrer", in *Paradeigmata*, ed. F. Link, vol. I (Berlin: 1989) 55-81, esp. 75.

Turning to the third component of Ephrem's sacramental triad, the sacred oil of anointing, we discover not surprisingly a number of parallels with Dionysius' treatment of the *myron*. The oil is the seal of believers at Baptism and of the clergy¹²⁷. It conveys "the hidden image of our hidden King", Christ¹²⁸, and Christ again is he in whom "the symbols all took shelter". As with *EH IV* where the *myron* sums up the sacraments, for Ephrem the oil is the completion of "the symbols for the Lord of symbols"¹²⁹. Its action on the believer is compared to God, who "descended upon the top of the Mountain and gave brightness to Moses"¹³⁰, and in this connection with Sinai and the light of glory we might recall the association implicit in the *myron*'s placement and handling in *EH IV* with the experience of contemplation. Finally, it is the chrism that consecrates the altar¹³¹. Perhaps relatedly, since the imagery of perfume is also important for Dionysius' portrayal of the *myron* as an illustration of Christ¹³², Ephrem speaks of the Lord as "The treasury of glorious perfumes", and asks that the believers "might inhale and be sated, and that the power of his deeds might permeate their senses"¹³³.

We have completed our discussion of Ephrem on the sacraments, and we have seen in his triad a striking approximation to many of the key points of the *EH*. In what follows, we shall also find – *inter alia* – an adumbration of Dionysius' bottom triad: the lay orders of ascetics, baptized laity, and those in process of purification.

4. The Mountain of God: Ephrem's Paradise Hymns and the Corpus Dionysiacum

The *Paradise Hymns* are perhaps Ephrem's *chef d'oeuvre*, a remarkable synthesis of poetry and symbology displaying a profound grasp of long extant scriptural and exegetical traditions. We shall not dwell on any of these elements, save to observe – following S. Brock and N. S'ed – that he reveals an acquaintance with currents of tradition going back to first century Palestine in a way very reminiscent of what we noted in Evagrius with respect to Sinai, only more so¹³⁴. The *Hymns* draw on these traditions in order to present the paradise of Genesis 2-3 as at once a mountain and a series of concentric circles. Each level of the mountain, each circle, represents in turn: 1) a different degree of beatitude

127. *De vir.* 7.6 (McVey 294).

128. *Ibid.* 7.5.

129. *Ibid.* 6.7 (McVey 290).

130. *Ibid.* 6.1 (McVey 287).

131. *Ibid.* 4.10 (McVey 278).

132. See especially IV.3.4 477C-480A (98.23-99.14).

133. *De vir.* 19.1 (McVey 341-342).

134. See N. S'ed's fascinating "Les Hymnes sur le paradis de saint Ephrem et les traditions juives" *LM* (1968) 455-501. S. Brock, "Introduction" to *Hymns on Paradise* 7-75 (esp. 39-74), provides an authoritative summary of Ephrem's teaching, touching on much of the material of S'ed's article along the way. See esp. Brock's chart of Ephrem's triads and their parallels, *Ibid.* 53, as a basis for our remarks following.

corresponding to the Church's division into penitents, the just, and the victorious;¹³⁵ 2) one of the three components of the human being – body, soul, and *voûç*;¹³⁶ 3) stages of the ascent up Sinai in Exodus 19 and 24, with the *Shekinta* on the summit, Moses on the heights, Aaron and the priests on the slopes, and the people at the base;¹³⁷ and 4) perhaps implied as well something of the “geography” of the church building, from Ephrem's allusions to the structure of the Jerusalem temple. Thus the innermost shrine of Paradise, the Tree of Life, corresponds to the Holy of Holies (the sanctuary/altar of the Christian church), while the Tree of Knowledge answers to the veil or curtain dividing the innermost shrine of the Ark from the holy place (or nave)¹³⁸. By implication therefore, we would see the middle and lower slopes corresponding, respectively, to the nave as the place of the “just” (baptized laity), and the narthex for the penitents (and catechumens). At the summit of the mountain, or within and over the innermost shrine, is as noted the presence of God himself, the *Shekintah* or the Glory¹³⁹. The other “trees” around the holy of holies, guarding the summit and bowing before the Tree of Life, appear to represent the angelic hosts¹⁴⁰. Borrowing perhaps from the imagery of Lev 16:11 ff., Ephrem presents Adam as intended originally to be the priest of this sanctuary: “[His] keeping of the commandments was to be his censer, that he might enter before the Hidden One into that hidden Tabernacle”¹⁴¹. The Fall lost this privilege and in Christ it was restored. Jesus and his Cross therefore stand in the midst of Paradise as the Tree of Life, the place of the glory, and the *axis mundi* uniting heaven and earth¹⁴².

In this sketch of those aspects of the *Paradise Hymns* that we feel most relevant to Dionysius, we find a number of interesting parallels, or at least affinities, with what we take to be a number of ruling themes in the *CD*. Beside the notes of light and hiddenness, the veils and the glory¹⁴³, there is first of all

135. See *de parad.* 2.11, *CSCO* 174:7 (Brock 88-89).

136. *Ibid.* 9.20, 40 (Brock 143).

137. *Ibid.* 10.12, 8 (Brock 89).

138. *Ibid.* 3.5 and 14, 9 and 11 (Brock 92 and 95).

139. *Ibid.* 2.12; 3.1, 6, 12-13; *CSCO* 174:7-9 and 11 (Brock 88-89, 92, 94-95).

140. *Ibid.* 3.2 and 15, *CSCO* 174:7 and 11-12 (Brock 91 and 95-6). See S'ed, “*Les Hymnes*”, 487-492, for this theme from Jewish speculation. It also appears in the *Macarian Homilies* (Collection I) II.2; 5:15-19.

141. *Ibid.* 3.16, 12 (96).

142. See for example 4.4-5; 6.7-8, 23; 7.1-2; and 8.1-2; *CSCO* 13-14, 21, 24, 25-6, and 33 (Brock 98-99, 111, 117, 119, and 131-132); together with M. Schmidt's remarks, “Alttestamentliche Typologie” 73, on *de parad.* 3.15 and 9.24 and 29 regarding Christ and the Cross: “...ein Zeichen der Gleichwertigkeit der vertikalen und horizontalen Vorstellung des Paradies... die Weltachse und höchste Kraft des Vaters”.

143. See again S'ed, “*Le Hymnes*” 468, on Ephrem's parallels with the Merkabah mysticism of early Judaism, and esp. 482 on Christ as the Glory/Shekinah both in the Church and in the believer.

Ephrem's recourse to the Sinai motif so familiar from the *MT*¹⁴⁴. Second, we find the simultaneous application of the "mountain of God" to both the macrocosmos of the Church and the microcosm of the human being. This juxtaposition or superimposition of macro- and microcosm employs, third, something exactly analogous to the hierarchy of the *EH*, specifically the latter's bottom triad of monastics (Ephrem's "perfect" or "victorious"), baptized laity (Ephrem's "just"), and those being purified ("the repentant")¹⁴⁵. It does so in such a way, fourth, as to make each level answer to a degree of glory, to a measure of the knowledge of God¹⁴⁶, and is thus – at least implicitly – congruent with the "geography" of the Christian assembly. Therefore only one of the three triads comprising "our hierarchy" according to Dionysius does not find an equivalent in Ephrem. The ordained clergy are nowhere mentioned in these hymns. This is not so much to say that Ephrem is anti-clerical or unsacramental, since he is clearly neither, as it is to underline one of the Areopagite's special concerns¹⁴⁷. He sought, in short, to insert the hierarchy of the sacramental ministers, itself traditional from the time at least of Ignatius of Antioch, into and between the two triads that Ephrem outlines here. The point in any case is clear: all three triads of the *EH* were long-established in Syrian Christianity. Dionysius was simply the first to assemble them in one systematic accounting – though even here, as we shall see momentarily, he was working with certain precedents offered him by the Syrian Church as a result of the fourth and fifth century controversy over the "Messalians".

Before leaving Ephrem, we should like to note two further points. The first is, again, the joining or concentration of his thought – theology, christology, ecclesiology, and the mystical experience – in the instant of the Eucharistic communion. This note of the "sudden" is repeated a second time in *de parad.* 5.11¹⁴⁸ where the silence of the Presence in the midst of the garden is broken, "suddenly", by the thrice-holy of Isaiah 6, paralleling the thunder on Sinai in Exodus 19 and pointing at once to the Church's worship and to the visitation of

144. Noted also by Schmidt, "Alttestamentliche Typologie", 65, a parallel that she sees as evidence that the "Gebrauch und Verständnis dieser Typologie bei den syrisch-christlichen Schriftstellern einen festen Platz hatte, womit die Annahme erhärtet wird, dass der unbekannte Autor der 'Mystischen Theologie' aus dem syrischen Sprach- und Kulturraum stammen dürfte".

145. See Murray, "Symbolism in Ephrem", 9, on this triad, as well as Schmidt, "Alttestamentliche", 78. See also *de vir.* 52.3 (McVey 466).

146. S'ed, "Les Hymnes", 463 and 482.8.

147. Murray, *Symbols*, 228, does though feel that Ephrem's use of the tabernacle image "symbolizes primarily living bodies in which the Holy Spirit dwells" rather than the ecclesial assembly. On the other hand, S'ed, "Les Hymnes", 476, notes the equivalence of Church/Paradise together with the human microcosmos. See also Schmidt, "Alttestamentliche", 80, for the "all-embracing" nature of the Church in Ephrem: "Das Paradies ist bei Ephräm vor allen die Vorstellung seiner Kosmologie, Soteriologie, Ekklesiologie und Eschatologie". Even if Murray's view is not an exaggeration, however, the theme of the "little temple" alone establishes an affinity with Dionysius.

148. *CSCO* 174:18 (Brock 106).

God in prayer¹⁴⁹. Second, the note of hierarchy reappears elsewhere in Ephrem, for example in the following from *de nativitate* where he speaks of angelic and human knowledge in terms reminiscent of Dionysius' συμμετρία and ἀναλογία:

The Watchers as Watchers saw him, according to the degree of his knowledge each person saw him. Everyone according to the measure of his discernment thus perceived him... each according to measure acquires knowledge of him: heavenly natures and earthly¹⁵⁰.

It is clear that the idea of hierarchy, if not the term itself, is well established in Ephrem. For Dionysius' addition of his middle triad, however, we are obliged to turn to other sources.

F. MICROCOSM OR THE "LITTLE CHURCH" IN THE *LIBER GRADUUM*, "MACARIUS", AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

1. The *Liber Graduum*

Written in Persia sometime in the latter half of the fourth century and never, it seems, translated from Syriac into Greek, the *Liber Graduum* or *Book of Steps* is still worth mentioning here because it seems to have been the first work in either language to have advanced a clear and deliberate coordination between "the Church – its ministry... its priesthood, eucharistic sacrifice, altar baptism, catechesis" – and the life of [inward] prayer at three levels: that which is visible and public (*qalya*), that which is hidden or secret (*kasya*) in the heart, and that which is above (*I'el*) or heavenly (*šmayyana*)¹⁵¹. We believe that these three levels – the heavenly church, the visible one, and the "church of the heart" – correspond more or less exactly with the Dionysian plan of the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies, together with the latter as the inner human writ large. We also think that the reason for the composition of both the *Liber* and the *CD* was much the same. Murray speaks of the *Liber's* insistence on "the divine origin, lawfulness, and importance of the public 'level' with what seems an undertone of defensiveness"¹⁵². The author was writing in a situation where he, or at least his particular views, were under criticism, if not attack. This accords with the Messalian crisis that we have observed obtained in the East from the end of the fourth century onwards, and in fact the *Liber* was, on its first printing earlier this century, called a "Messalian" work, though that label seems happily to have been rejected by more

149. See Schmidt, "Alttestamentliche", 72-73.

150. *De nat.* 4.199-202, *CSCO* 186:43 (McVey 103).

151. Murray, *Symbols*, 263. For the text in Syriac and Latin translation, M. Kmosko, *Patrologia Syriaca* III (Paris: 1926), esp. 285-304 for the key *Discourse* XII. We have used S. Brock's translation of *Discourse* XII in *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo: 1987) 45-53.

152. *Symbols*, 263, see also 129.

exacting scholarship¹⁵³. Vööbus' remarks sum up the reponse: "There is not only nothing of the doctrine and views ascribed to the Messalian movement, but positively the document unfolds a theological structure which leaves no room for Messalian teachings"¹⁵⁴. On the other hand, it is worth noting that Guillaumont, who shares Vööbus' general views, still sees in the *Liber's* division of Christians into the "perfect" (i.e., ascetics who have renounced the world) and the "just" (the baptized laity) as, at the least, susceptible to the creation of "a tension, not to say a conflict, between the perfect and the ecclesiastical hierarchy"¹⁵⁵. It betrays, in other words, something of that tension that we have noted was latent and not infrequently expressed in the monastic movement, and with regard to which we find Dionysius laboring to reply¹⁵⁶.

Nonetheless, the *Liber's* conscious effort at the coordination of the heavenly, earthly, and inner realities of the Christian dispensation does mark a new and most significant step on the way toward our understanding of the CD. In the one passage, *Discourse XII*, that seeks specifically to make these connections, it is the Lord himself, the author tells us, who "established this church, altar, and baptism which can be seen by the body's eye", and he did so in order that:

By starting from these visible things, and provided that our bodies become temples and our hearts altars, we might find ourselves in their heavenly counterparts... migrating there and entering in while we are still in this visible church¹⁵⁷.

The earthly Church's "priesthood and its ministry" act as "fair examples [Dionysius would say εἰκόνες or ἀγάλματα] for all those who imitate there the vigils, fasting, and endurance of our Lord"¹⁵⁸. To hold the visible Church in contempt, he continues (with the more extreme representatives of Syrian asceticism in mind?), ensures that our body

... will not become a temple, nor will our heart become an altar... Nor shall we have revealed to us that Church on high with its altar, its light, and its priesthood, where are gathered all the saints who are pure in heart¹⁵⁹.

153. See Kmosko's *Praefatio* for the accusation, and for the rebuttal, A. Vööbus, *Hist. of Asc.* I:178-184, and A. Guillaumont, "Situation et signification du *Liber Graduum* dans la spiritualité syriaque", in *Symposium Syriacum 1972*, OCA 197 (Rome: 1974) 311-325.

154. *Hist. of Asc.* I:183.

155. "Situation et signification", 321. See also A. Persic, "La Chiesa di Siria e i 'gradi' della vita Christiana", in *Per Foramen Acus* (Milano: 1986) 208-263, esp. 214-222.

156. Perhaps of some note, given our focus on Evagrius above, is Vööbus' observation that the *Liber* appears often to have circulated under Evagrius' name, *Hist. of Asc.* I:184, note 31. Other people, it seems, were also and early drawing a parallel between the ascetic from Pontus and the advocate of the "little church".

157. Kmosko, *PS III*, 288:23-289:1 (English from Brock, 46.2).

158. 289:2-4 (46).

159. 289:14-22 (46).

The Church in heaven is revealed in the “likeness” – again recall Dionysius’ εἰκών, ὁμοίωμα, ἄγαλμα etc. – that is the earthly Church¹⁶⁰, and it is again the latter that makes each believer the “body and heart where the Lord dwells... in truth a temple and an altar”¹⁶¹. There are therefore, the *Liber* declares, “three churches, and [each and together] their ministries possess life”¹⁶². The earthly Church is the necessary mediator enabling the Christian to “find himself in the Church of the heart and in the Church on high”¹⁶³. All three Churches, all three liturgies, are thus necessary, although only the second (the heart) and the third (the heavenly original) will abide the eschaton. There, “on the mountain of the Lord” which is the Church in heaven, “shines the light of the countenance of our Lord” and there alone is he “seen openly”¹⁶⁴. Let us note the allusion here to Zion and the temple. The “mountain” in question is that mentioned in Ps 24:3-5¹⁶⁵. Implicitly, we may surely recall Sinai and Thabor as well. Now let us recall *CH* I.3, *DN* I.4 and *MT* I.3: the liturgy as the image both of heaven and of the “deiform *habitus* [ἔξις]”, the “now” of symbols and the “then” of the eschaton foreshadowed in the Transfiguration, and the ascent of the “mountain” into the cloud and before the Presence. The “mountain” for both the *Liber* and the *CD* is an image at once of the eschaton, the liturgical assembly, and the mystical encounter. The parallels are striking, indeed, and we think in addition that the historical context that produced them – i.e., the tension between ascetic experience and ecclesiastical authority – is much the same as well.

2. “Macarius”

The “three Churches” of the *Liber* and the adumbration thus of the *CD* acquire a still sharper focus in the late fourth century body of writings traditionally ascribed to Macarius the Great of Scete, but since credited to an unknown author, imbued with the traditions of Syriac Christianity, but writing in Greek from somewhere in Roman Mesopotamia near the Persian frontier¹⁶⁶. The writings were

160. 292:13-16 (48).

161. 292:7-10 (48).

162. 294:23-4 (49.4).

163. 296:8-10 (49).

164. 301:15-3104:11 (52-53).

165. 304:17-20.

166. For a brief summary of the Macarian question, see G. Maloney’s “Introduction”, *Pseudo-Macarius: the Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York: 1991) esp. 3-11. Several collections of critically edited texts exist of the Macarian corpus, handed down over the centuries in many different recensions. The most broadly circulated was the collection of fifty homilies that Maloney chose to translate. Its critical edition is *Die 50 geistliche Homilien des Makarios*, ed. H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, and M. Kröger for *Patristische Texte und Studien* 6 (Berlin: 1964). Added later to the fifty, we have the seven additional homilies first edited by G. L. Marriott, *Macarii Anecdota: Seven Unpublished Homilies of Macarius* (Cambridge MA: 1918). These two collections we shall henceforth refer to as (II). Perhaps the most important and certainly the largest collection (sixty-four homilies) is that edited by H. Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon, Reden und Briefe: Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694*

destined to have an influence as great as their contemporary, Evagrius, in both the Greek "West" and the Syrian "East" from the fifth through the fifteenth centuries, and beyond. That influence must often have been clandestine, since it seems that "Macarius" was nearly as controversial in Greek ecclesiastical circles as was Evagrius¹⁶⁷. That aura of controversy is perhaps the reason why these writings do not appear in the patristic library cited by Dionysius' scholiasts¹⁶⁸. Yet it is clear to us that Macarius and Dionysius have more in common than anyone has heretofore thought fit to see in them.

The whole thrust of the *Macarian Homilies* is in effect our point seven from chapter V above: "the soul as throne of God", or temple¹⁶⁹. This *leitmotif* is perhaps most forcefully expressed in Macarius' famous allegorization of Ezekiel's vision of the *Merkabah*, the divine chariot, that begins *Homily* 1 in the collection of fifty: "For he [the prophet] beheld a mystery of the soul that is going to receive its Lord and become the throne of his glory"¹⁷⁰. Rather as Evagrius appears to have been the first to internalize Sinai (though Ephrem seems to have anticipated him at least somewhat), so does Macarius turn the long established tradition of *Merkabah* speculation into an inner experience¹⁷¹. The experience – and Macarius is nothing if not emphatic about its experiential character¹⁷² – is known in the form of light:

(B), GCS (Berlin: 1973), henceforth (I). We shall also refer to W. Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden: 1965) 233-301, for the text of the "Great Letter", henceforth Jaeger. The "Symeon" referred to in Berthold's edition of (I) represents a scholarly enthusiasm, lasting some two generations, and based on H. Dörries' identification of "Macarius" with the Messalian writer, Symeon of Mesopotamia, condemned at Ephesus in 431 (see Dörries: *Symeon von Mesopotamien. Die Überlieferung des messalianischen Makarios-Schriften* (Leipzig: 1941)). The "Messalian" label was one that Dörries would later reject in his last work, *Die Theologie des Makarios-Symeon* (Göttingen: 1978). Although a number of scholars have remained on the Messalian bandwagon, most today would doubtless follow C. Stewart's summary of the Macarian writings (whoever wrote them – it is certainly not proven it was "Symeon") as "the emergence into the Greek-speaking environment of language and imagery rooted in the Semitic earth of Syriac Christianity", "Working", 169, cf. also 234-235.

167. Thus see the official lists of "Messalian" tenets held up for official condemnation that Stewart has compiled and analyzed in "Working", 52-68. Many of the propositions condemned are lifted directly from the homilies, though they as often appear to have been misconstrued.

168. Though the Scholiast does mention the Messalians twice, PG IV 169D-172A and 557B. There may also be an unacknowledged debt to Macarius in his use of *plerophoreo* in the context of mystical union with Christ (353D). For the special association of this term with mystical union as one of Macarius' signature themes, see again Stewart, "Working", 97-116.

169. See G. Florovsky, *The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers* (Belmont, MA: 1987) 154.

170. (II) 1.2 (Dörries 1-2); cf. also 1.12 (19-20).

171. See G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* 3rd rev.ed. (Jerusalem: 1973) 40-79, for the *Merkabah* tradition in Jewish mysticism of the first centuries A.D. He also singles out Macarius as a "mystical reinterpretation of the *Merkabah*", 79.

172. See the article of P. Miquel, "Les caractères de l'expérience spirituelle selon le Pseudo-Macaire" *Ir* 31 (1966) 497-513, and tracing the tradition of *πεῖρα*, *Le vocabulaire de l'expérience spirituelle dans la tradition patristique grecque du IVe au XIVe siècle* (Beauchesne: 1991).

[The soul] is illumined by the beauty of his [the Lord's] ineffable glory... she becomes all light... the ineffable beauty of the glory of the light of Christ who ascends and takes his throne upon her¹⁷³.

While his use of Ezekiel 1 is clearly in the context of the eschaton, Macarius is very clear elsewhere that the believer may experience the glory of the Kingdom "while still in [this] world", within the temple of the heart or *voûs*¹⁷⁴. He provides testimony of his own personal experiences in the following, remarkable passage from *Homily* 8 (II):

To certain persons the sign of the cross appeared as light and plunged itself deep into the inner man. At another time a man entered into ecstasy while in prayer and found himself standing in a church before an altar, and three breads were offered him as it were leavened by oil, [and] as he ate the more he increased... another time again a kind of robe of light [appeared] such as there does not exist on earth in this age... at yet another time this light shining as it were in his heart opened [onto] the more inward and deeper and hidden light, such that the whole man was swallowed up in that sweetness¹⁷⁵.

Specifically and on several occasions he links this experience of light with the scriptural account of the Transfiguration, for example:

As the body of the Lord was glorified when he ascended the mountain and was transfigured into the divine glory and the infinite light, so, too, are the bodies of the saints glorified... and [while now] the power of Christ is within [*ἔσωθεν*] the saints, on that day it will overflow into the bodies outside [*ἔξωθεν*]. For even now [*ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*] they partake in their intellect [*voûs*] of his essence and nature¹⁷⁶.

Likewise Moses on Sinai appears frequently as the OT type of the glory both present and to come¹⁷⁷. The same passages featuring Moses, together with still others, make use of a "now... then" (*νῦν... τότε*) construction that clearly recalls the use of the same adverbs in an identical context in *DN* I.4. For example: For what the soul now [*νῦν*] has treasured up within [*ἐνδον*], will then [*τότε*] be

173. (II) 1.2 (1-2).

174. (I) 10.3.2 (138:15).

175. (II) 8.3 (78-80).

176. (II) 15.38 (149-50). For other Transfiguration references, see also (II) 4.13 (37), 8.3 (79), and (I) 10.3.1 (138:4 ff.). The last contains a phrase that rather strikingly recalls *DN* I.4: "As the sun... one sees the brilliance of his rays [*τὰς μαρμαρυγὰς τῶν ἀκτίνων*]... [so] they shall see the ineffable variety of the inexpressible glory, how it is transfigured 'from glory to glory'".

177. See for example (II) 5.10 (62), 12.14 (114), 38.2 (272), and 47.1 (304).

revealed and appear outside [ἐξωθεν] the body”¹⁷⁸, and: “For what dwells now within the soul will then go outside and effect the resurrection of the body”¹⁷⁹. The glory of God, through the gift and indwelling of Christ, is therefore a present possibility as well as the eschatological consummation. The one difference is that now it is available hiddenly, i.e., within the “temple of the body” and so in the “inner man” or soul¹⁸⁰. Yet this is the same glory that shone from Moses’ face coming down from Sinai, that was hidden behind the veil of the temple, and that stunned the disciples on Thabor.

Christ is the key. All the OT images of God’s dwelling with Israel – Sinai, tabernacle, Jerusalem, temple – are summed up in him. He is himself the “true world [κόσμος ἀληθινός] and living bread, and fruit-bearing vine, and bread of life, and living water”¹⁸¹. He becomes thus for his holy ones “their house and tabernacle and city... their dwelling not made with hands”¹⁸². This dwelling and city, this heavenly Jerusalem¹⁸³ is of course the Church, the new creation¹⁸⁴, and it binds together angels and humans, heaven and earth: “For thus was God well pleased, that those below and those in heaven might become one Church in a single bond of love”¹⁸⁵. Holding all together in a single living community, their head and soul, is Christ: “For they are his limbs and body, the whole church of the saints, and he is the head of the Church as a soul is in all its body”¹⁸⁶. As with Origen and – to a certain degree – with Ephrem as well, all the types of the types of the OT, such as Passover and Exodus together with Jerusalem and the temple, become

...mysteries [μυστήρια]... of the soul.... Glory to him who delivered the soul from the slavery of Pharaoh and established it as [his] house and temple and pure bride, and has brought it into the kingdom of everlasting life while it is even still in this world¹⁸⁷.

Heaven and earth, hidden and manifest, the world to come and this world coexist in the Church on earth and, in particular, in the Christian soul.

178. (II) 5.8 (60), 5.9 (61).

179. (II) 11.1 (96). See also the Moses texts cited just above, together with (II) 32.2 (252) and 34.2 (261). Macarius, like Dionysius, seems also to be responding to doubts concerning the resurrection of the body, perhaps against something like the Origenist opinion. See in this regard, for example, (II) 15.10 (132-3): “All the members are raised... [they] are not, as some say, dissolved and turned into fire, [such that] the nature [of the physical world] should no longer exist”. We recall both *DNI.4* and *EH VII.1 ff.*

180. See the *Great Letter 9* (Jaeger 45).

181. (II) 34.1 (260).

182. *Ibid.* 2 (261).

183. (II) 38.3 (272).

184. *Great Letter 13* (Jaeger 251-2).

185. (I) 1 (74:11-16).

186. (II) 52.4 (Marriott 26).

187. (II) 42.15 (310).

Before turning to Macarius' development of the soul/church parallel, we should like to set the stage a little further while touching on a number (sadly, not all) of his terminological similarities with the *CD*. These will have a bearing on the notion of the soul as church, and they will also serve at once to expand the parallels with Dionysius regarding this central theme, and to indicate certain sources that the two writers may have had in common. The similarities are: 1) the notion of the church/soul as "world" and especially "city" (πόλις); 2) the stress on motion and repose (στάσις, μονή, ἐπιστροφή), and finally 3) the soul's perpetual ascent into God's infinity (ἐπέκτασις, ἀπειρία).

Let us begin with the last. Macarius' God is infinite, ἄπειρος. He has "made himself small" in his Incarnation in order that "the soul might be able to live in and perceive the divinity"¹⁸⁸. God's infinity squeezing itself into a human body, on the one hand, is reciprocated, on the other hand, by the soul's perpetual expansion into the Godhead – which is to say that Macarius advocates something very like Gregory of Nyssa's ἐπέκτασις¹⁸⁹. As the eye of the "inner man" opens up and begins to see:

Doors are opened to him and he enters into many mansions [μοναί], and as many as he enters [so many] again are opened to him... from one hundred mansions into another hundred mansions; and he is made wealthy, and as much as he is made wealthy, yet again other, newer wonders are shown to him¹⁹⁰.

The "motor" of this eternal increase, as with the *CD*, is the impulsion of a love or yearning (ἔρως) that is both a feature of created nature and a gift of grace¹⁹¹. In speaking of this ascent Macarius repeats often that the saint's yearning or love is "insatiable (ἀχορέστως)", as in the following: "The enjoyment of God is insatiable, and as much of it as one may come to and eat, the more one hungers"¹⁹². It is difficult not to catch in this word especially some echo of Nyssa's effort to respond to Origen's finite God, as well as to the Alexandrian's notion of the original fall.

Turning toward God with a yearning that is both natural and supernatural at once requires and elicits a particular spiritual condition: repentance and humility, or meekness (πραότης). Whoever is visited by the "abyss of the grace of light, to that degree [that he does possess it] he knows himself poor and wretched"¹⁹³. In

188. (II) 4.9-10 (33-4).

189. See, for example, (II) 8.6 (83); 10.1 and 4 (93 and 95); and 15.37 (149).

190. (II) 8.6 (83).

191. See *Great Letter*, 23 (Jaeger 271): "divine ἔρως and the "wound of love" are our possession. We receive "heavenly ἔρως" from above. The latter is also the gift of prayer. See also (II) 5.5 (50), where ἔρως and ἀγάπη are the "new creation" of the Christians, and 14.9 (88) where the ἔρως of the ἀγάπη of God is the "heavenly fire" that Christ came to shed on the earth.

192. (II) 15.37 (149). See also 10.4 (95): "insatiable yearning for the Lord", "immeasurable and insatiable ἀγάπη", and the adverb "insatiably" twice here and twice again earlier in 10.1 (93).

193. (II) 16.12 (164).

Homily 37 (II), Macarius points to much the same OT examples of meekness as Evagrius and Dionysius¹⁹⁴, and then presents this virtue as the precondition for entry “within the veil” in order to behold “the future things with certainty”¹⁹⁵. Allied thus with the ascent through ἔρως and meekness is the process of conversion, and in Macarius’ lexicon the latter occasionally carries the name of return, ἐπιστροφή¹⁹⁶. On at least one occasion he uses μονή for the repose and indwelling of Christ¹⁹⁷. Now, this is not to say that he is aware of Neoplatonist philosophy and a terminological predecessor of Dionysius in the strict sense. Both ἐπιστροφή and μονή were in the air of the time, and both appear in the Greek scriptures. What it does do, though, is remind us at the least that these words had certain resonances, other than to a strictly metaphysical depiction of the cycle of being, and that these associations may also have been at work for the Areopagite even as he was quoting or paraphrasing his pagan sources – μονή with its echo of John’s Gospel and ἐπιστροφή carrying the force both of repentance and of return to our home in God. Even repose or stillness, στάσις, finds a place in the Macarian corpus. The soul is called to “mirror the eternal good things” – we recall the hierarchies as “mirrors” of God – and to “attain to repose [στάσις] and sure foundation [ἐδραιότης] and untroubledness [ἀταραξία]... in the peace of Christ”¹⁹⁸, because Christianity is “another world [ἕτερος κόσμος]” than this¹⁹⁹. We might recall here the language of *DN XI* and the divine peace and σωτηρία.

The reference to the “other world” of Christians brings us to Macarius’ use of the ideas of world (κόσμος), city (πόλις), and citizenship or polity (πολίτευμα, πολιτεία) with respect to the Church and the Christian. Christ is himself the true κόσμος of the Christians²⁰⁰. He is their πόλις²⁰¹, and both the way to the city and its portal²⁰². The heavenly city is the Christians’ real home and goal²⁰³, and their world²⁰⁴. It is even in this life the dwelling place of the inner man²⁰⁵. It is identical with the heavenly Church²⁰⁶, and possessed of ranks and degrees – hierarchy – like any city²⁰⁷. The city of the King and of the first-born, an echo of Hebrews 12²⁰⁸, it

194. (II) 37.1 (265).

195. *Ibid.* 5 (266-267).

196. See (II) 4.17 (39) and 24 (43), and esp. (I) 3.5.6-8 (39:8-29, esp. 8-16). Note also the latter’s use of ἐπίγνωσις together with ἔνωσις and ἐνώω

197. (II) 29.9 (246), quoting John 14.

198. (II) 5.4 (49).

199. *Ibid.* 1 (46-47).

200. (II) 34.1 (260).

201. *Ibid.* 2 (261).

202. (I) 3.3 (31).

203. (II) 12.4 (109); 15.3 (132); 16.8 (163); and (I) 6.3 (86).

204. (II) 16.3 (163).

205. (I) 5.2 (77-78).

206. (II) 38.3 (272).

207. (II) 36.2 (264).

208. (II) 43.4 (287) and 44.6 (294).

is there that we have our true citizenship, *πολίτευμα*²⁰⁹, while our way of life here below, our *πολιτεία*, is in imitation of it²¹⁰. Indeed, through the monastic life in particular one may already breathe that city's air and partake of the life of the angels²¹¹. There is certainly nothing new in all of this. We noted the echo of Hebrews, and we might add the Revelation as well. But once more, the echoes of this same, peculiarly Christian (and perhaps especially monastic) "politics" seem to us to constitute part and parcel of the atmosphere of the *CD* as well²¹². Both men look for the kingdom to come, and the imitation of its eternity in the life of the church (and monastery) here below.

Macarius is not a man without, or insensitive to, community. His attention to and concern for the workings and harmony of his congregation of ascetics is evident from the *Great Letter* alone²¹³. Murray remarks justly that there "is no tension here between the public church and that in the heart, and the eschatological language is strikingly 'realized' in the ordinary liturgical life of the Church"²¹⁴. All the same, however, Macarius is not without his own opposition (as we shall see shortly), nor – and relatedly – is his primary attention focused on ecclesiastical structures and the liturgy. Both the latter figure importantly in his thought but, as with the *Liber Graduum*, their function is to illustrate and mediate between the heavenly church and the soul²¹⁵. The latter is Macarius' true interest. It is for the sake of the soul that the Word took flesh and "hid his divinity so that he might save the like [τὸ ὅμοιον] through the like", and both Christ and all the heavenly host minister to and with the soul²¹⁶. The center of the human being, the heart (*καρδία*), is therefore spacious indeed. It is the home of good and evil (*ἡ ἐναντία*)²¹⁷. Heaven and hell are within²¹⁸, and there Christ seeks to make his throne together with his angels and establish his kingdom²¹⁹. The "inner man", heart or intellect, is the "site" of the heavenly city where the Lord and the angels

209. (II) 31.6 (250).

210. (II) 43.9 (290).

211. *Great Letter* 30 and 34 (Jaeger 285 and 290).

212. We are reminded of R. Hathaway's analysis of the political language of, especially, *Ep. VIII* in *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order*, and in particular his (rather disgusted?) conclusion on page 124 that the Areopagite's system is simply non-political, "devoid of citizenship". This is true, at least so far as participation in the political process of the state – or Roman empire – goes. But then that is not the empire or kingdom that either Dionysius or Macarius is looking toward.

213. *Great Letter*, esp. 15-35 (Jaeger 256-292).

214. Symbols, 274.

215. See *Ibid.* 275.

216. (II) 25.44 (153).

217. (II) 15.30 (146).

218. (II) 43.7 (289).

219. (II) 15.33 (146); and also 6.5 (68-69) for the *voûs* as throne of divinity, together with 33.2 (258-259) on Ezekiel 1 and the soul. See in addition 7.7-8 (75-76) for Macarius' definition of the soul as the "inner man", like an angel (*ὁμοία... τῷ ἀγγέλῳ*) in inward reality, and the *voûs* as the "eye" of the "inner man".

come to dwell “as into their homeland”²²⁰, and so where he reigns and the vision of him in glory occurs²²¹. The soul is the place of the heavenly Jerusalem:

And he [Christ], on the throne of his majesty in the highest in the heavenly city, comes down and is wholly with her [the soul] in her body. For he established her image [εἰκὼν] on high in the heavenly city, [in] the Jerusalem of the saints, and the same image [ἡ ἰδίᾳ εἰκὼν] of the ineffable glory of his divinity he established in her body. He himself ministers to her in the city of her body, and she in turn ministers to him in the heavenly city²²².

This language of service or ministry, διακονέω, has something of a liturgical ring to it. That echo of the Church’s worship is hardly unique. Elsewhere Macarius speaks of a process of gathering, συναγωγή, in a way reminiscent of Dionysius in the *EH*, particularly of course regarding the σύναξις of the Eucharist. The soul is to gather, συνάγει, her wandering thoughts “into the house of her body”, in order that Christ may “gather her unto himself and make her thoughts divine... heavenly, and teach her true prayer”²²³. The gathering and the prayer are a double process. While they depend on human action, it is finally Christ who “by his own will comes to you and makes his abode [μονή] with you”²²⁴. We find in other words something very like Dionysius’ ἐπιστροφή and ἀναγωγή as accomplished or imaged through the rites of the earthly church.

The echo of liturgical and especially Eucharistic imagery is especially marked in *Homily 44* (II). Whoever, Macarius begins, wishes to become Christ’s minister, literally one who stands beside his throne (πάρεδρος), must be transformed, μεταβληθῆναι. The latter is a verb with definite Eucharistic overtones²²⁵. The associations become more specific as he continues:

For our Lord came for this reason, that he might change [ἀλλάξαι] and transform [μεταβαλεῖν] and renew and recreate the soul that had been overturned by the passions... mingling [κεράσας] with it his own Spirit of divinity [an echo of the epiclesis?].... he came in short to make new men, anointing them with his own light of knowledge, that he might put [in them] the new wine which is his Spirit²²⁶.

Again, in the following paragraph:

He who changes [μεταβάλλων] the nature of the five breads into many...

220. (II) 16.13 (165).

221. (II) 17.3-4 (168).

222. (II) 44.4 (303).

223. (I) 4.7.1 (48:27-49:4).

224. *Ibid.* On συνάγω, see also (II) 31.3 (248) and 33.4 (259) for Christ’s gathering, as also (I) 3.1 (27-28); (II) 49.2-3 (316-317) for the soul’s activity. See Chapter III above, 138, note 148.

225. See Lampe, 848 for μεταβολή, and 850 for μεταβάλλω as terms used in connection with the change of the Eucharistic elements from the time of Justin Martyr.

226. (II) 44.1 (291).

the same can change... this soul... into his own goodness by the Spirit of the promise²²⁷.

The change effected by Christ is the exercise of his eternal priesthood: "the true priest of the future good things... entered into the tabernacle of their bodies, and he ministers to and heals the passions"²²⁸. Those in whom Christ has exercised his priesthood appear thus as "the vessels in whom God is well pleased and bestows his grace". They themselves in turn "receive the sanctifying power [ἁγιαστικὴ δύναμις]" without which no teaching carries authority²²⁹. The priesthood and liturgy of Christ is thus manifested in those who are inspired and holy. At this point we have obviously arrived at the language and thinking that underlay much of the Messalian controversy, and that could have easily been "seen as a threat to hard-won church order"²³⁰. That Macarius took steps to avoid a "de-emphasis of sacramental and official ministers"²³¹, and in such a way that he anticipated the *CD*, we shall see momentarily.

If the worship of the Christian Church is reflected in – or better, reflects – the working of grace in the believer's soul, then it follows that the Church itself discovers its true analogue in the same. In the following passage we recall I Cor 3:16, Evagrius in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, together of course with the *CD*:

The body of the human being is a temple of God... and the human heart is an altar of the Holy Spirit.... With the temple of the Lord let us also sanctify the altar, that he may light our lamps, and that we may enter into his bridal chamber²³².

The work of sanctifying the heart/altar and body/temple means that purity and order, διακόσμησις (certainly an important term for Dionysius), must prevail within in order that the whole company of heaven may take up its residence there. As the householder prepares his or her home for the arrival of a royal guest, so:

How much more so does the house of the soul, in which the Lord takes his rest, need much order [διακόσμησις] so that he who is without spot or stain may be able to enter therein and rest. For it is in such a heart that God and all the Church of heaven take their rest²³³.

227. *Ibid.* 2 (292).

228. *Ibid.* 4 (293) For continued use of μεταβάλλω, see *Ibid.* 8-9 (295). See also (II) 4.11 (36) for a suggestion of similar sacramental imagery.

229. (II) 15.52 (157).

230. Stewart, "Working", 238.

231. *Ibid.*

232. (I) 7.18.3 (114:11 ff.). See also 5.2.7 (78:4-9) and (II) 28.1 (231) for a parallel between the soul and the Jerusalem temple, and (II) 31.5 (249-250) for the body/soul as altar of the heavenly fire in a recollection of Elijah calling down fire on Mt. Carmel, I Kings 18:30-40.

233. (II) 15.45 (153-154).

It is within the soul, as for Ephrem in his *Paradise Hymns*, that Christ has planted the “all-splendid paradise of the Holy Spirit”²³⁴ and, again in a recollection of Eucharistic imagery, it is only through Christ that the soul may receive “mingling [μῑξις] and communion [κοινωνία] of the heavenly nature in order to become “the temple and dwelling place of God”²³⁵. Macarius can thus appeal quite directly to the principle of microcosm and macrocosm:

‘Church’ is therefore said with regard both to the many and to the single soul. For that soul which gathers [συνάγει] all its thoughts is also the Church of God... and this term [therefore] applies in the case both of many [people] and of one [person]²³⁶.

But what precisely is the relation of the one soul to the many, and especially to the community of the faithful here on earth who gather to celebrate the sacraments? In what we have so far described, we note not only parallels or at least affinities with the *CD*, but also the potential for several of the same accusations that have been lodged against Dionysius. Macarius, as a “Messalian”, has also been accused of exhibiting more Neoplatonism than Christianity and thus, *inter alia*, of evacuating the Christian sacraments of any real content by turning them into mere illustrations of inner experience²³⁷. The answer he offers to such charges, since it does appear that he was faced with a double opposition – advocates of both an extremely “spiritualizing” position, on one hand, and angry or suspicious ecclesiastics, on the other – bears a singular resemblance to key elements in the *CD* of a century later. That answer is developed most fully in *Homily 52 (I)*²³⁸. The principle that governs it is, as with Dionysius in *Ep. X* of the *CD*, simply that “all visible things are types [τύποι] and likenesses [ὁμοιώματα] and images [εἰκόνες] of the invisible”²³⁹. The visible Church is the providentially given icon here below of both the Church in heaven and the inner man.

This is therefore the note on which Macarius begins *Homily 52 (I)*:

The whole visible arrangement [φαινομένη οἰκονομία] of the Church of God came to pass for the sake of the living and intelligible being [νοερὰ οὐσία] of the rational soul that was made according to the image of God, and that is the living and true Church of God... For the Church of Christ

234. (II) 28.3 (232).

235. (II) 32.6 (255), citing I Cor 6:19-20.

236. (II) 21.5 (115-116), and see also 37.8-9 (268-269).

237. See most recently H.-V. Beyer, “Die Lichtlehre”, 504 for the Neoplatonist charge, and 509 for Macarius vs. the Eucharist.

238. See the references to this homily in Stewart, “Working”, 218-220, developing Murray’s remarks on the “little church” in *Symbols*, 262-76, and our use of both in “The Mysticism of Dionysius”, 105-106. In what follows here, we shall essentially be repeating material published in a second article, “Hierarchy versus Anarchy?” *SVTQ* 38,2 (1994) 131-179, esp. 157-160.

239. (I) 3.3.10 (7); cf. Dionysius, 1117B (208.9-10).

and temple of God and true altar and living sacrifice is the man of God²⁴⁰.

Just as the Old Testament was the shadow of the New, he continues, “so is the present and visible Church a shadow of the rational and true inner man”²⁴¹. Macarius does not, however, mean that the visible Church is “merely” a symbol. He seems indeed to have been accused of this very thing by “many who are nurslings in the faith”, and who, “for the sake of the similarity and statutes of names and of worship... trust alone in the statutes of the flesh”²⁴². Such trust in the purely outward and visible is misplaced, first and foremost, because “the living activity of the Holy Spirit is to be sought from God in living hearts”, and therefore because only the latter will endure the eschaton, while “all the present arrangement [of the Church] will pass away”²⁴³. Secondly, though, and on this side of the eschaton, the visible rites do carry a “real presence:” “The Savior granted through the Apostles that the Comforter Spirit should be present and take part in all the liturgy of the holy Church of God”²⁴⁴. The same Spirit is genuinely communicated to the faithful through the sacraments, although it does stay “far away from the unworthy [ἀνόξιου]”²⁴⁵. The true function, thirdly, of the visible Church is therefore as an icon, in the full, sacramental sense of the term. It is indeed, Macarius says, for this reason that the Saviour came and that we have:

...the whole formation [διατύπωσις] of the icon [εἰκὼν] of the Church, that the intelligible beings [νοεραὶ οὐσίαι] of faithful souls might... be made again and renewed and, having accepted transformation [μεταβολή], be enabled to inherit life everlasting²⁴⁶.

Once again, and in quite unmistakable form, we find the parallel between the Christian soul and the Eucharistic liturgy. The consecration, μεταβολή, of the sacred elements is an anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the believer.

We thus find Macarius turning his attention next to the shape of the Eucharistic liturgy itself. He begins by restating his point in a way that reminds us very much of Dionysius' remarks in *CH* I.3:

Because visible things are the type and shadow of hidden ones, and the visible temple [a type] of the temple of the heart, and the priest [a type] of

240. (I) 52.1 (138:1-8).

241. *Ibid.* 2 (10-11).

242. *Ibid.* 3 (138:18-32). The reference to “names” is intriguing, the more so as Macarius has just noted that “things that are bodily and without soul were honored with names similar to the rational... and heavenly beings” (138:4-6), by God's economy. We naturally recall Dionysius against the literalists in *CH* II-IV.

243. *Ibid.* 6 (139:27-29).

244. *Ibid.* 4 (139:7-9).

245. *Ibid.* 5 (139:26-27).

246. *Ibid.* 6 (139:30-140:2).

the true priest of the grace of Christ, and all the rest of the sequence [ἀκολουθία] of the visible arrangement [a type] of the rational and hidden matters of the inner man, we receive the manifest arrangement and administration [τὴν καταφαινομένην οἰκονομίαν καὶ διοίκησιν] of the Church as an illustration [ὑπόδειγμα] of [what is] at work in the soul by grace²⁴⁷.

By sequence and arrangement, ἀκολουθία and οἰκονομία, Macarius means, respectively, the sequence of the liturgy and the hierarchical ordering of the faithful and clergy. Beginning with the first, he observes that the two parts of the Eucharistic liturgy, the σύναξις (liturgy of the word) and ἀναφορὰ (offertory, consecration with the invocation of the Spirit, and communion), are incomplete without each other. The whole rule (κανὼν) of the first must be completed in order for the consecration to follow and, conversely, the σύναξις is “incomplete and in vain” without sacramental communion²⁴⁸. Just so, he argues, is it the case for the individual Christian. The latter must have the full complement of “fasting, vigil, prayer, asceticism, and every virtue” for the “mystical activity of the Spirit” to be “accomplished by grace on the altar of the heart”²⁴⁹. This interior order (κόσμος) of the Spirit’s activity (ἐνέργεια) corresponds thus to the visible order and glory of the sacrament²⁵⁰.

Turning to the order of the Church’s hierarchy, Macarius remarks bring very sharply back to mind what Dionysius had had to say to Demophilus about the physical place of each of the Church’s ranks of believers and celebrants. Those faithful, Macarius says, who “do not sin and who make progress... come to the priesthood, and they are transferred from some outer place [ἀπὸ τόπου τινὸς ἑξωτερικοῦ]” – by the latter referring presumably to the narthex or nave – “up to the altar [ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον] so that they may be God’s ministers and assistants [λειτουργοὶ καὶ πάρεδροι]”²⁵¹. We have come across πάρεδροι already, and shall again shortly below. Here it is quite clearly referring to those around the throne, ἔδρα of Christ, just as the clergy would be seated around the bishop’s throne in the σύνθρονος in the apse of Macarius’ local church. As he did with the liturgy’s sequence, Macarius then takes and applies this spatial arrangement of clergy and laity to those “Christians who are moved by grace”²⁵². Whoever sins must repent and confess in order to come again under the “oversight” – ἐπισκοπῆς, an evident play on ἐπίσκοπος – of the Spirit²⁵³. As for the soul that makes continual progress in the struggle for the virtues:

247. *Ibid.* 2.1 (140:3-8), and cf. *CHI* 3 121C-4A (8:18-9:6).

248. *Ibid.* 2.2 (140:8-19).

249. *Ibid.* 2.3 (21-23).

250. *Ibid.* (141:2-3). Note the use of κόσμος, simultaneously here both order/adornment and world, and recall our description of the Dionysian τάξις in Chapter III above, 121ff.

251. *Ibid.* 2.5 (141:13-15). Compare Dionysius, *Ep.* VIII, esp. 1088D-1089A (176:9-177:8).

252. *Ibid.* (16).

253. *Ibid.* 2.7 (142:1).

It is made worthy of promotion [μετάθεσις] and of spiritual rank [ἀξιωμα], and of being transferred from divine to heavenly mysteries... and thus, having reached the perfect measure of Christianity through both her own freely willed ordeal and help from on high, the soul will be inscribed in the Kingdom among the perfect workers and with the blameless ministers and assistants [λειτουργοὶ καὶ πάρεδροι] of Christ²⁵⁴.

The spatial ordering of clergy and laity is the icon of both the τάξις of heaven and of the illumined soul. Here, a hundred years before the composition of the *CD*, we find the core of its portrayal of hierarchy. Macarius' development of the soul as throne of God and little church is the foundation upon which Dionysius would build his synthesis, his correction of Evagrius and the Origenists, and his incorporation of those elements in late Neoplatonism that he felt were compatible with the Christian tradition.

3. Between Macarius and the Corpus Dionysiacum: fifth- and sixth-century notices of the "little church"

Macarius, especially his fifty-second *Homily*, by himself would be enough to show that Dionysius was not as original with respect to his hierarchies as almost all scholars have read him to date. Taken together with Ephrem and the *Liber Graduum*, and even earlier known traditions, he clearly stands in continuity with a tradition alive and well in the late fourth century. These writings, however, together with the "Messalianism" that inspired – or provoked – at least Macarius and the *Liber*, continued on well past the fourth century. The theme of the "little church" in particular appears continuously thereafter in Syrian literature, at least into the eighth century. We shall therefore take two examples each from Syriac writers in the fifth and sixth centuries in order to illustrate the continuum within which we maintain the *CD* belongs.

One of our fifth-century examples mentions the "little church" notion specifically. This is the homily traditionally ascribed to Ephrem, "On Hermits and Desert Dwellers"²⁵⁵. Its anonymous author describes the utter poverty and labors of the ascetics with words and ideas that by now are quite familiar to us:

They stay very late at service, and they rise early for service. The whole day and night, their occupation is the service. Instead of incense, which they do not have, their purity is reconciliation. And instead of a church

254. *Ibid.* 2.8 (142:9-16). On the transference from "divine to heavenly mysteries", Macarius seems to have in mind moving from the sacraments here below to the experience directly of the Kingdom. So recall Dionysius to John at Patmos: there are some in this life who already partake of the one to come (*Ep.* X 1117B [208:13-9:2]).

255. Text from the translation of J. Amar in *Ascetic Behavior in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: a Sourcebook*, ed. W. L. Wimbush (Minneapolis: 1990).

building, they become temples of the Holy Spirit. Instead of altars, [they have] their minds. And as oblations, their prayers are offered to the Godhead, pleasing him at all times²⁵⁶.

The body of the holy man is the Church in its fulness, the place where sacrifice to God is accomplished.

The second example comes from a little later on the same century. It is the Syriac *Life* of St. Symeon Stylites, composed around 473 A.D.²⁵⁷. The saint was honored by two other *Lives*, one while he still lived written by Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and the other shortly after his death in 459 by a monk of his monastery, Antinous²⁵⁸. The latter two, both in Greek, present portraits of the saint quite different from the Syriac account. Theodoret in particular looks at Symeon with very "Greek" eyes, reading him as a model of the ascetic's mastery over the body, a paradigm of the will's triumph over the flesh²⁵⁹. By contrast, the Syriac *Life* is much longer and significantly different in emphasis. Although it does not specifically mention the theme we have been pursuing, it points in exactly the same direction. Several features recall as well still other points that we have raised in connection with the *CD*.

Let us begin by looking at a couple of those other features. The *Life* mentions the Eucharist no less than fourteen times, as opposed to once only in the Greek accounts²⁶⁰. A heavenly Eucharist begins the saint's career²⁶¹. It is his sole nourishment during Lent early in his asceticism²⁶², marks the end of his periods of abstinence and various ordeals²⁶³, banishes a plague²⁶⁴, ends a drought²⁶⁵, stops a moving mountain²⁶⁶, and marks the holy man's communion with the angels²⁶⁷. Another interesting feature is that, while the unordained Symeon is himself

256. *Ibid.* 79:481-496. See also 72:181-184 and 73:229-232. Amar's "Introduction" provides the provenance and dating of the text (early fifth century), and notes the Evagrian influences at work in the ascetic traditions of Syria in this period, 67-68.

257. See R. Doran's "Introduction" to *The Lives of Symeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo: 1992). Our references to the *Life* will be taken exclusively from Doran's translation, the numbered paragraphs of the *Life* followed by page numbers in parentheses. On the Syriac text that he chose, see *Ibid.* 45-51.

258. *Ibid.* 36-34. See also S. Ashbrook Harvey's analysis of all three *Lives* in "The Sense of a Stylite: Perspectives on Symeon the Elder" *VC* 42 (1988) 376-394.

259. Harvey, "Sense of a Stylite", 379-380.

260. Syriac: 5 (107), 10 (110), 18 (113), 24 (116), 28 (118), 29 (119), 54 (135), 61 (141), 85 (165), 86 (166), 87 (167), 98 (171), 99 (172), and 101 (173). Theodoret: 7 (73).

261. *Life* 5 (107).

262. 10 (110).

263. Eg. 18 (113), 24 (116), 28 (118), 29 (119), 101 (173), and after a vision in 54 (135).

264. 61 (141).

265. 85 (165).

266. 86 (166).

267. See again 5 (107), together with 98-99 (171-172) and 112 (181).

referred to several times as a priest²⁶⁸, the regular clergy of the region – bishops, priests, and deacons – appear with remarkable frequency. Time and again local and pilgrim priests from the countryside show up before his column, often together with their flocks, and receive confirmation in their authority²⁶⁹. Symeon, in short and not to make a pun, is represented as a pillar and support of the hierarchy. Thus in one of the climactic moments of his life, featuring a vision of Elijah in the glory of the heavenly chariot and with overtones of the Transfiguration, the saint is given an express commission by the prophet:

You should be concerned about God's priests and that the laws of the Church be observed. You should make sure that no one despises or scorns the priesthood. You should order everyone to obey the priests and their superiors²⁷⁰.

It is difficult not to see in this emphasis on the Eucharist and the authority of the clergy a deliberate effort on the part of the *Life's* author. We are, in other words, in the same territory as Athanasius' desire to portray Anthony as a supporter of ecclesiastical order, or Bishop Rabbula's canons legislating discipline in the monasteries, or the *Liber's* and Macarius' efforts to harmonize the charismatic with the institutional, or finally – and only a generation or so later than Symeon's *Life* – Dionysius' *Epistle VIII* to Demophilus. The *Life* certainly does not want to deny its saint's charismatic authority, but it is just as clearly laboring to situate this remarkable figure as firmly as possible within the context of the Church's hierarchical structure and sacramental life. Such concerns do not arise without cause, and we may be sure that the same concerns were around when Dionysius took up his pen twenty or so years later.

Perhaps even more interesting than these parallels are certain other recurring elements in the *Life*. S. Harvey's article singles out in particular the overall theme of "transformation", and within it the supporting themes of Sinai and Thabor, Moses and Elijah, sacred high place and altar, Eucharist and incense offering²⁷¹. At the center of these different themes, and thus approaching the idea we have been stressing of the little church, is the figure of the stylite himself. Symeon's pillar becomes at once the altar and the mountain of God, and the saint in his own person the oblation of incense and even, in a way, a personification or manifestation of the Eucharistic presence itself²⁷². He is called "to reorder God's world, to be a

268. The *Life* calls him "overseer" (bishop?) in 3 (105), "priest of the Holy Spirit" in 45 (129), and "annointed priest" in 130 (195).

269. See 14 (112) where a bishop calls the holy man a "chosen vessel", together with 38 (122), 50 (132), 69 (150-1), 76 (158), 79 (159), 81 (162), 85-86 (165), 87 (166-167), 90 (168), 92 (169), 120 (189), 124 (191) on the saint embracing all the priests and "as a father to them", 125-126 (192-193) honored by all the clergy.

270. 43 (127).

271. "Sense of a Stylite", 381-386.

272. *Ibid.* 384-385.

new Moses dispensing from his new Mount Sinai the New Law"²⁷³. "The ultimate image of Christ", Harvey continues, "that rests behind this portrait of Symeon" is the "high mountain apart" on which "Christ was transfigured before his apostles"²⁷⁴, and therefore the stylite is portrayed as transfigured, like Christ himself, "in the presence of Moses and Elijah"²⁷⁵. Symeon thus both sees the light of Christ on several occasions²⁷⁶, and in turn reveals the glory of divinity to those who encounter him²⁷⁷. He is himself the place of encounter, the τόπος θεοῦ

The latter point leads us to two other matters, both of them admittedly a little speculative, that we think link the *Life* to at least the thought world of the *Areopagitica*, in particular as we have discussed the *CD* with respect to *DN* I.4 and *Ep.* III. The first is once again the word "suddenly". The term occurs, at least in the English translation by Doran (we did not have access to the Syriac text he used), five times in the *Life*. It shows up once with a flash of light, "like lightning", that restores the saint's sight²⁷⁸, then again with light that banishes the demons²⁷⁹, with a second restoration of vision through "the providence of Christ"²⁸⁰, a second flash "like lightning" accompanied this time by the vision of an angel²⁸¹, and the fifth time involves "sudden" relief from demonic attack²⁸². These appearances of the "suddenly" – given of course that the English faithfully reproduces the Syriac – at the least should recall to us those NT uses of the term we found while discussing both Dionysius' *Ep.* III and Ephrem's employment of the phrase, *men shel*: Paul's vision on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 and 22, the visitation to the shepherds near Bethlehem in Luke 2, and the (implied) lighting flash of the Transfiguration narratives. We have to wonder whether, given these similar uses of the term by three very different writers, we are not again in the presence of a common tradition regarding the use and interpretation of the ἐξαίφνης as it appears in the NT.

Neither, though the following is more speculative still, should we limit ourselves to scriptural affinities. We recall that Dionysius' "suddenly" also had obvious roots in the Platonist tradition, especially in the "instant" of the *Parmenides* that bridges the gap between στάσις and κίνησις, eternity and time. Here our attention is drawn chiefly by a feature of Symeon's activity – or non activity – on

273. *Ibid.* 382. We recall Moses in *MT* I.3 as well as in *EH* V.1.2 as a type of the Christian hierarchy, and the latter in turn in *EH* I.3 as the summation or even epiphany of the whole hierarchy, i.e., of the Church. Symeon, in short, is a hierarch in something very like the Dionysian sense.

274. *Ibid.* 384.

275. *Ibid.* 386. See *Life* 41-43 (127-127).

276. *Life* 23 (114), 24 (115), and 52 (134).

277. *Ibid.* 68 (148-149) and 75 (157).

278. 23 (114-115).

279. 24 (115).

280. 43 (130).

281. 52 (134).

282. 84 (164).

his column. He stands, arms outstretched in the form of a cross, atop the stone that had served him as incense altar and Eucharistic niche, and he is told to do so by an angel²⁸³. His posture derives from traditional Syrian piety, in particular its longing for the imitation of Christ²⁸⁴. It also had a second traditional association, however, and that was with the “Standing Ones”, i.e., the angels who stand eternally and “watch” before the face of God²⁸⁵. Doran even does us the kindness of drawing a specific connection to Plato: “From Plato on, ‘to stand’ is commonly used for the stability of the transcendent realm which does not participate in the flow of becoming”²⁸⁶. Symeon atop his column is therefore a point of intersection: between heaven and earth, being and becoming, eternity and time, God and man²⁸⁷. To say the least, these polarities are all familiar to us from the *CD*. When we therefore recall *Ep. III*’s presentation of them as meeting in the “suddenly” of Christ, together with the fact that the *Life* deliberately portrays the stylite on his pillar as a recollection and even a manifestation of Christ on Thabor, then can we not say in fact that Symeon emerges as a living example of, or parallel to, the Dionysian ἐξαιφνης? In his own person he has become the “sudden”. If it is not possible to speak of “influence” in this case (though who knows? Symeon did live in the “neighborhood” of the *CD*, both temporally and geographically), then at the very least we are moving in the same atmosphere – not only of piety and spirituality, but as well of the interpretation of themes in common from Platonism and the Christian scriptures. In a Christian tradition going back again to the NT, Christ is himself associated with the “sudden”, and after him – because manifesting him – we find the Ignatian martyr, Clement’s gnostic, and (the language seems to us to be quite conscious), the ascetic holy man of the monastic *Vitae*, whether of an Antony or of a Symeon. The *CD*’s *Epistle III* is in perfect continuity with this current.

Turning to the early 500’s A.D., we find two poems, both of them written for the occasion of the consecration of a church: the sermon by the chorepiscopus Balai for the church at Qennešrin (Chalcis), and by the bishop Babai for the cathedral at Edessa. R. Murray has provided us with a near complete translation of the first, and K. McVey of the second²⁸⁸. Balai makes clear reference to the theme of the little church in stanzas 20-21:

Three [gathered] in thy name are [already] a church... for they have toiled

283. 112 (181).

284. See Doran, “Introduction”, *Ibid.* 32, and H. J. W. Drijvers, “Die Legende des heiligen Alexius”, 187-217 for the cross tradition and theme of the *imitatio Christi*.

285. Doran, *Ibid.* 32-33.

286. *Ibid.* citing the study by M. Williams, *The Immoveable Race: A Gnostic Designation and the Theme of Stability in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: 1985).

287. *Ibid.* 35, citing Evagrius Scholasticus, *Church History* 1.13.

288. For Balai, *Symbols*, 271-274, and for Babai, McVey, “The Domed Church as Microcosm: Literary Roots of an Architectural Symbol” *DOP* 39 (1983) 91-121: text 91-94, trans. 95, commentary 96-106, and analysis 106-121.

on the church of the heart and brought it to the holy temple, built in thy name. May the church that is inward be as fair as the church that is outward is splendid. Mayst thou dwell in the inner and keep the outer, for [both] heart and church are sealed by thy name²⁸⁹.

The poem moves on to the figure of the priest of the church in stanzas 24-26. Here we find something like the Dionysian hierarch, the holy man of illumined heart:

May his soul surpass in hidden beauty the visible adornment which the house displays. Since his heart carries the temple of his Lord... this visible house proclaims concerning the mind of him who built it, that the inward heart is illumined and fair²⁹⁰.

Babai's poem, on the other hand, lacks the note of the "inner church" that we have found in Balai, Macarius, etc.²⁹¹. It does, however, refer its reader to Exodus and the traditions of the tabernacle and divine presence in Israel that we have touched upon often²⁹². Its ruling theme, that of the church building as a microcosm of the universe, is itself of interest in light of our analysis of Dionysius' Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in chapter III above, i.e., of the Church as his true world. Both Babai and Balai are in any case witnesses to the fact that these two ideas, the ecclesiastical microcosm and the individual believer as microcosm of the Church, were flourishing in the Christian Syria of the early sixth century. Indeed, given that these two men were also ranking church officers, hierarchs, we might even say that this play on the theme of macrocosm/microcosm was practically official teaching in the generations immediately after the likely apparition of the *CD*. We do not mean by this that Dionysius was the cause of its appearance, but rather that he was himself within a continuum that began well before him and carried on afterwards. Here, too, we also begin to approach the matter of the *CD*'s swift reception in the Greek (and Syriac) East.

Summary: Important elements in the Dionysian corpus find their origins, or certainly key affinities, in traditional themes and emphases of Syriac-speaking Christianity, beginning with the ancient tradition of the ascetic "single one" and running up to and through the fourth and fifth century emergence of the idea of the sanctified believer as the "little church". These two ideas are furthermore connected to each other. The latter owes its articulation at least in part to the need for a response to extreme elements within Syrian asceticism whose emphasis on their "singleness" threatened the maintenance of traditional church order – the

289. Symbols, 272.

290. *Ibid.* 273.

291. See McVey's comment on this, "The Domed Church" 120-121.

292. *Ibid.* 95:1-3, and McVey's commentary 96-98.

leadership of the sacramental ministers – and sacramental practice. Dionysius reflects the same concern, and he adds to it his desire to reply both to the late Neoplatonist thinkers, whom he admired, and to Evagrius and the Origenists of the late fifth century, to whom he was also indebted. The result is the *CD*, in particular its hierarchies, and the seemingly curious version of the genre of liturgical commentary that the *EH* presents.

Modern scholarship has usually seen in the Dionysian application of liturgical commentary something strange and quite without precedent in Christian literature. The explanation for it has therefore looked primarily to his dependence on Iamblichus and Proclus, together with a nod in the direction of Christian Alexandria²⁹³. P. Rorem has recently summed up this view: “When it comes to precedents for the Areopagite’s interest in the liturgical actions as timeless allegory, as opposed to Theodore’s typology of Christ’s passion or Cyril’s exegesis of the liturgical texts, there are no credible candidates within Christianity. There is, however, a methodological similarity to Iamblichus regarding the rituals of later Neoplatonism”²⁹⁴. Aside from the fact that Dionysius’ “allegories” are not perfectly timeless but linked instead to his eschatology and christology, it also appears to be the case, in light of the Syrian ascetic tradition we have just outlined, that his version of mystagogy is after all neither curious nor without precedent. His interest in and exposition of the Church’s worship owes more to Macarius, in short, than to either Cyril of Jerusalem or to Theodore of Mopsuestia (though it does have notable affinities to both the latter, especially to the last). This is so because his concerns are likewise similar to Macarius, just as his roots are in the same ascetical tradition. Here is the source of that “timeless” and “allegorical” character of his treatment of the Church and its sacraments. Iamblichan theurgy is doubtless a contributing element, but more important still is the long tradition, beginning with the NT itself and running through the Alexandria of Philo and Clement, of the believer as the *ἄνθρωπος Θεοῦ*. The same tradition in Syria, arriving there doubtless from the same Palestinian (?) sources as had inspired the Alexandrians, received if anything greater emphasis than elsewhere in the Christian world. We saw it alluded to in the passage quoted above from the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, and developed at some length in Ephrem’s treatment of the Paradise Mountain. It then reaches a kind of bloom in the *Liber Graduum* and Macarius, after whom it remains a constant feature of even official – i.e., clerical – Syrian Christianity. The clerical interest, if we may put it that way, is clear even in the *Life* of so prominent an ascetic as the famous stylite, Symeon. We do something of an injustice, though, to this interest in church order and the sacraments by labelling it simply “clerical”, since it was also and primarily rooted in ascetic practice and thought. Its most powerful exponent prior to Dionysius,

293. See Bornert, *Les commentaires*, 48-71 for the Alexandrians and Dionysius, and esp. 66-69.

294. Commentary, 121.

Macarius, was clearly himself a monk and anxious to affirm the harmony of Christianity's institutional worship with the faith's subjective appropriation. Dionysius stands in this same continuum, predominantly ascetic and Syrian inspired. It is only thus, we believe, that the success of his corpus could have been so immediate, powerful, and long lasting. He was received, in sum because his readers (in particular the monks) recognized, beneath the unusual vocabulary and baroque syntax, themes and concerns, together with a testimony to experience, that they held in common with the Areopagite and that everyone involved wholly approved. Were they not monks who commissioned that mosaic adorning the apse of St. Catherine's church at Mt. Sinai? Were not people like a John of Scythopolis, a Severus of Antioch (even a Stephen bar Sudaili) monks as well, before at least they became bishops?

Christian Syria, in short, supplies a vital and up to now entirely missing piece in the puzzle not only of Dionysius' Christian background, but as well both of his swift reception and of the great authority that he would enjoy in the Christian East ever afterward. Even much of his apparently novel way of treating the names of God, christology and triadology, together with his understanding of the role of language, scripture and sacrament, discovers surprising affinities in the writings of an Ephrem Syrus. Given this "Syrian connection", and within the context of those concerns that run through Syrian Christian literature from its beginnings, the main lines of the *CD* take on a new and hitherto unsuspected familiarity. Neither Dionysius' *Divine Names* nor his *Mystical Theology*, for which patristic precedents have been admitted by modern scholarship, nor even and especially his treatises on the hierarchies were all that new and different. They all belong a continuum. Perhaps, though, it is better to say that there are various *continua* that converge in the *CD*. The great frame that enables this convergence is the explication of "our hierarchy", and that, too, as we have just seen, finds its roots in a long established way of reading the paradoxical relationship between the Christian's life in this world and his or her hope of the age to come.

FINAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ὁ καθόλου θεῖος ἀνὴρ ὁ τῶν θείων ἄξιος κοινωνός...
ναὸς δὲ ἅμα καὶ ὁπαδός. . . τοῦ θεαρχικοῦ πνεύματος
ἔσται . . . καὶ ἑτέροις ἱατρὸς ὁφθήσεται.

EH III.3.7 433C

We have sought to demonstrate over the course of this essay that Dionysius was rooted in a community of belief, a continuum, and this evaluation – as scholars such as Lossky, von Balthasar, and Bouyer have recognized – has all along been that of the ecclesiastical tradition. From the beginning the Church, in particular the ascetic community, recognized that the CD articulated its own experience, in however new and unfamiliar an idiom.

A. RECOGNITION OF THE CHURCH: THE CORPUS DIONYSIACUM'S RECEPTION

Or was that idiom really so new, so very unfamiliar? How, as has occasionally been suggested, could the Dionysian pseudonym alone have persuaded the trained and not uncritical minds that were around “even” in the sixth century to accept a body of writings which was entirely – or even just mostly – alien to the Christian faith? As G. Florovsky once remarked; “It hardly seems possible that the patent anachronism of the document could have remained unnoticed... historical memory at the time was not *that* weak”¹. The suggestion is too great a strain on credulity. J. Pelikan’s observation is surely to the point here: “Pseudonymity usually succeeds only if it manages to set down on paper what everyone will recognize as commonly received truth”². We do not need to follow Pelikan, though, in seeing the work of John of Scythopolis and Maximus Confessor in the following century as necessary to facilitate Dionysius’ “odyssey from the heretical [Monophysite] East to the Orthodox [Chalcedonian] East”³. Pelikan is voicing a

1. *Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Writers*, 204. For similar questions, at least implied, regarding John of Scythopolis, see P. Rorem and J. Lamoreaux, “John of Scythopolis” esp. 482, and with respect to John Philoponus, J. M. Rist in “Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul”, 136, note 7.

2. “The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality”, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 23.

3. *Ibid.*

widespread opinion, i.e., that the Dionysian corpus was sufficiently alien to the esse of Christian tradition as to require “christological” and other “correctives”⁴. The need for such “correctives” has been much exaggerated. A Severus of Antioch, John of Scythopolis, or a John Philoponus, and later on a Maximus, Germanos of Constantinople, and a John Damascene – indeed, noted representatives of especially the ascetic tradition down to the very end of the Byzantine era (to whom we shall return below) – felt entirely free to promote the Areopagite, and even, in the case of the earlier writers, perhaps to participate consciously in the pious fiction of the pseudonym. They must have done so not because they were fooled by the forgery, but because they recognized in the “divine Dionysius” someone whose central concerns mirrored their own convictions, and whose witness to those concerns they felt was important and even necessary.

Stiglmayr, for example, charted the practically instantaneous and overwhelming success of the word, hierarchy, that Dionysius invented in order to express his system⁵. We cannot believe that this success owed exclusively to the fact that sixth century society was stratified (though more on that below, too). If the Dionysian hierarchy provided a sociological expression in tune with the times, it also and more importantly answered to a need within the Christian Church, and was moreover perceived by the latter to have articulated basic givens of Christian experience: *κόσμος* and *τάξις* as foundational to the life in Christ of both the community and the individual soul. Dionysius’ hierarchy bound the two together. It wedded the ecclesial once and for all to the mystical, the sacramental to the experiential, and it was enabled both to do so and to be recognized as such because it built on themes already long-established in the Eastern Christian tradition, in particular of the ascetics.

As for the leaders of the Christian Church and Empire, Hypatius of Ephesus provides us with an example of the sort of episcopal readership that would receive the *CD*. This is the metropolitan who headed the colloquium that the Emperor Justinian convoked in 532/533 in order to reconcile the different parties in contention over Chalcedon. The dissidents quoted Dionysius on the *θεανδρικὴ ἐνέγγεια* in support of their position. Hypatius refused to countenance the citation, pointing out that none of the earlier fathers – Athanasius, Cyril – had ever referred to this body of writings⁶. Yet practically within days of this refusal, we

4. For examples of this opinion, see J. Meyendorff on Gregory Palamas’ use of the Areopagite in *Introduction to Gregory Palamas*, trans. G. A. Lawrence (London: 1964) 187-192 and 204-209, and more recently, K. P. Wesche, “Christological Doctrine and Liturgical Interpretation in Pseudo-Dionysius” *SVTQ* 33,1 (1989) 53-73, and his “Reply to Hieromonk Alexander’s Reply” *SVTQ* 34,4 (1990) 324-327. For a reply in particular to Meyendorff on this issue, see J. Romanides, “Notes on the Palamite Controversy and Related Topics” *GOTR* IX (1963/64) esp. 250-262.

5. “Über die Termini Hierarch und Hierarchia” *ZKT* 22 (1898) 180-187.

6. *Acta Concilium Oecumenicorum* IV.2: Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum sub Iustiniano habitum 2.173:13-18.

find him writing to a suffragan in order to defend the use and veneration of images, and doing so in language that is highly reminiscent of the Areopagite. This does not necessarily mean that he had read the *CD*, but his letter surely provides us with the example of a bishop who could easily have accepted the corpus as “a leader’s manual or guide, intended not for the immediate use of all the faithful, but for the guidance of the hierarch who in turn leads others”⁷. If anything, Hypatius is a good deal more the snob, more a confirmed elitist, than Dionysius⁸.

Moving to other figures of the early sixth century, we come to the men whom we discussed at the end of chapter VIII above: Severus, John of Scythopolis, Stephen bar Sudaili (with the qualifications we noted), and Sergius of Reshaina – to whom we might add Leontius of Byzantium⁹. What strikes us about their attitude to the *CD* is far less any effort to defend it (though John does note, it is true, that some questions were being raised¹⁰ than precisely a strenuous attempt *to lay claim to it* – whether for the non-Chalcedonian camp (Severus), or for the Chalcedonian definition (John), or for a reading in harmony with Evagrius (Sergius), or for his own, strange brand of pantheism (Stephen). While Hypatius indicates that the fight over the *CD* had spread to the capital, the main battle was being played out in Syria-Palestine (Leontius’ home ground as well). It is out of the latter region that the reading of the *CD* would come which would subsequently influence the Eastern Church to the present. Before we turn to that process, however, let us try to sum up our discussion so far by looking at that continuum to which Dionysius both belonged and contributed.

B. THE ELEMENTS OF THE DIONYSIAN SYNTHESIS

That element of the Dionysian synthesis which has been most to the fore in the scholarship of the past century is the matter of the *CD*’s relationship to Neoplatonism. Here we confront a shibboleth that has long troubled the investigation of Christian thought from its beginnings down to the Middle Ages: that is, the assumption that the Platonic tradition and Christianity are mutually exclusive. From our sketch above of the NT texts alone it should be clear that Platonic thought was part of the mental “furniture” of the earliest Christian

7. Rorem, *Symbols*, 149.

8. For the letter, see F. Diekamp, “Letter to Julius of Atramyntion” *Analecta Patristica*, OCA 117 (1938) 127-129, and 107ff for Diekamp’s introduction to Hypatius. P. J. Alexander provides a translation and discussion of the letter in “Hypatius of Ephesus: a note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century” *HTR* 45 (1952) 177-184. J. Gouillard, in “Hypatios d’Ephèse, ou de Pseudo-Denys à Théodore Studite” *REB* 19 (1961) 63-75, argues for Hypatius’ having read the *CD*. S. Gero, “Hypatius and the Cult of Images”, in *Christianity, Judaism, and other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith* (Leiden: 1975) 208-216, argues more convincingly to the contrary.

9. So see D. B. Evans, “Leontius of Byzantium and Dionysius the Areopagite” *EB* 7 (1980) 1-34.

10. *PG* IV 20AB.

documents¹¹. The same applies to all the writers that came after, from Irenaeus through Clement, Origen, the Cappadocians, Evagrius, and including the Syrians. Ephrem's dialectic and Macarius' use of the micro- macrocosm motif, together with the latter's emphasis on the "inner man", are as much the product of the Hellenistic and – yes – Platonist background of late antique thought as are the perhaps more obvious (or at least more generally acknowledged) debts that Origen and Nyssa owed to the philosophers. Indeed, Macarius' development of the idea of the "little church" seems to us to point to something very interesting and hitherto unremarked. His *Homilies*, together with the *Liber Graduum* and Evagrius, are only some two or three generations removed from Iamblichus' *de mysteriis*. We observed above that inquiry into Theodore of Mopsuestia's relationship to Iamblichus and his school might bear interesting fruit. The same applies perhaps even more to these exemplars of the ascetic tradition. They are all, including Iamblichus, fourth century writers; all represent themes that hark back to first century themes; and all are writing out of the same general area, Syria-Palestine, from which Dionysius would emerge a century later. Is it then so surprising that the Areopagite was recognized and welcomed? The mingling and confluence of scriptural (if we may speak so generally) and Platonist – even strictly Neoplatonist – themes had already been underway a long time, and that in directions which clearly foreshadowed the *CD*'s ruling themes.

Of course Dionysius borrowed from the Neoplatonists. We must recognize as a constituent element – and not an inconsiderable one – of the *CD* the ruling metaphor of Plotinus: the microcosm is the reality of the macrocosm. Reality itself is finally the great analog of mind, of levels of thought or *θεωρία*. Yet this is also an element that we encounter front and center in Origen, no less a contributor to the *CD*, and more clearly still in Evagrius. The world-levels are stages of contemplation providentially arranged to mirror our true being that we, in ascending, recognize again as our own. Dionysius' "great imaginative effort" was to take from both the sources of pagan and Christian Platonism¹², and to re-cast them both. He did so through incorporating them with other elements: 1) the Iamblichan theurgy that sought to establish communion via grace between gods and humans, intelligible and sensible; with 2) the fourth-century Church's new emphasis on mystagogy that stressed the Liturgy as type and presence of the age to come; and 3) the triadic ontology and the theological language of Proclus as reinterpreted in the light of 4) the Cappadocian discussion of the "Names" of God and Gregory of Nyssa's development of the Pauline mystical body of Christ, and 5) the writings of Ephrem and the *Macarian Homilies*, in particular the theme of the "little church". The result was the *CD*: a vision of the world redeemed in the

11. The same applies to first-century Jewish thought. See, for example, M. Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: 1980) esp. his conclusions 125-126.

12. Every, "Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite" *Cistercian Studies* 29 (1976) 83.

Church, itself the εἰκὼν – presence – here below of Heaven (God and the angels) given us in Jesus Christ, itself as well the image of our own true being, of humanity both corporate and individual: the body of Christ and unique locus of the encounter and union of God with his creature.

C. THE ICON OF THE MYSTERY

1. Transfiguration of the sensible

We turn to Dionysius' Christ and the notion of the icon. Harl on Origen remarked that the latter's Christ fulfills his function in so far as he becomes disincarnate. However valuable he might declare the value of icons, Origen was therefore the prototypical iconoclast¹³. All symbols, all images, because rooted precisely in a concrete and historical person, must finally be abandoned. Dionysius, on the other hand – as evidenced by Hypatius' letter – anticipates the iconodules¹⁴. The humanity of Jesus crowns and embraces the whole of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. That humanity clothes his divinity, the mystery hidden within the veils. Contemplating Jesus within the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy (and the Church within Jesus), the worshipper is led up through him to the vision of the angelic hosts, beyond whom, again, he encounters Jesus, God, lighting creation with the presence of his δυνάμεις. Jesus' humanity joins us to the angels and renders possible our knowledge of God and so our θεώσις. This is not unlike Origen, save that in the *CD* there is no ascent through time and worlds to God. Jesus' humanity, his body, is so to speak our permanent "envelope". One can never move through and beyond him to disincarnation. There is no "beyond", and motion is therefore always into him, the infinite center. Neither, then, are the "veils" ever to be wholly dissolved. The eschaton promises their transfiguration rather than their abolition. Everything is truly present *now*, and the succession of worlds – or moments of contemplation – have all been folded up and into our hierarchy, into the One who lives "forevermore". We can thus say that for Dionysius the icon, even while it looks forward to a more perfect transparency in the age to come, carries a certain permanent validity, and its validity is rooted exactly in the Incarnation, in Jesus who is our permanent bond with the νοητό both created and uncreated.

2. An "open" cycle

All is present now, all in a sense already accomplished. Yet it would be a mistake to say that the Dionysian cosmos is a frozen one. Quite to the contrary,

13. See the article by G. Florovsky, "Origen, Eusebius, and the Iconoclastic Controversy" *CH* XIX (1950) 77-96, esp. 86ff and 94-95 for the iconoclastic tendencies also present in Plotinus.

14. See Kitzinger, "Cult of the Icon" *DOP* 8 (1954) esp. 138; and also Armstrong, "Images" *SP* IX (1963) 123, on the Christian emphasis on humans as shifting the balance of religion away from "cosmic religion" to the image.

the impression that the reader takes away from it is one of constant motion, of the universal dance of providential grace descending, and of love ascending as purified desire, and of everything again turning around and into the Incarnate God. Motion is the key to the *CD*. Motion and its “refinement”, its unceasing conformity to the divine – and for us that also means to the angels and to Christ – is the reality of contemplation and salvation. Do we find this in the Neoplatonists? We do. It is none other than the cycle of *πρόοδος* – *ἐπιστροφή*. Dionysius has, however, shorn it of its demiurgic functions – save in the case of God alone. Neither does it refer any longer primarily to the structures of thought, or even to the psychology of mystical union. It has instead been personalized, made to depend on God’s grace realizing itself in creation through Christ. And this, furthermore, is the result of that long process of transformation we traced in Origen, Evagrius, the Cappadocians – especially the Nyssene – and the Syrians. In Plotinus and his successors the cycle comprises the sum of reality which necessarily ever was and will ever be: thought is *πρόοδος* – *ἐπιστροφή*, is being, is forever. The Origenist system adapted the cycle to signify the Fall, Providence, and the return to the “beginning”. Dionysius took from and corrected both in order to say that our *ἐπιστροφή* is the realization of God’s loving *πρόοδος* (or *πρόνοια*), the making actual of what he has ever willed us to become. We effect God’s *ἐπιστροφή* to himself and in so doing come increasingly to mirror his *πρόοδος* in love. The pagans’ cycle of being becomes Dionysius’ round of love. And another transformation: our motion is a striving to become ourselves, to possess what is ours in God, but, because God is the infinitely transcendent, our movement toward possession is necessarily without end. Here is the heritage of Irenaeus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Macarius. The cycle is still there, indeed, and both its “ends”, *ἀρχή* and *τέλος*, still meet in God, but one can no longer describe it as “closed”. For Gregory, as for Dionysius, to say that the “ends meet” in God is to say nothing at all – or, rather, it is to say everything and more than everything, since where, so far as human thought can comprehend, is there “meeting” in infinity? We still have the cycle, but cycles there can never be. No repetitions are possible where the “return” is endless, *ἀφομοίωσις* unceasing, and where the “beginnings” disappear together with the “end” into transcendence. And, because change, growth, or becoming are permanent, then so do our history, our world, our mode of being acquire a lasting importance and validity.

3. Christ the infinite center

Once again we arrive at Christ, and to another point Dionysius owes to Gregory’s development of the New Testament revelation: the “infinity within a span of the Incarnation”. Jesus is God’s mystery; in him the “ends” have already “met;” in him our “return” has already been accomplished. The cycle begins and ends in him, and he is the inexhaustible center of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy through and into whom we grow forever. Any analysis of the *CD* that neglects or loses sight of Christ’s true centrality will see the system at once collapse into incoherence. For without that center the *MT* must inevitably dominate and

dissolve the *EH*¹⁵. The logic of negation, of transcending the symbol through the ἀναγωγή, would insist upon this dissolution, and we should be left with either a cosmetically Christianized pagan or else a species of vertically oriented Origenist – in both cases a most unsatisfactory result. And an untrue one, since it would be to miss the heart of the *CD* and the tensions that we maintain are vital to it. With regard to the anagogy of the *EH*, we point to the following: 1) Dionysius' symbols carry a "real presence" while at the same time they are multi-valued, require continual transcendence through ascending negation; 2) Christ is truly present in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy that is his body, yet that presence must be discerned and the discernment reveals levels of apprehension; 3) we must therefore always ascend, ever further, ever deeper, yet – and here is the essential – *we never depart from the "place" where we began*. We are continually in motion about the same altar, the same Jesus Christ in whom our union with God is accomplished and present now. Von Balthasar has put the matter well: "In the Church's Liturgy the Platonic dialogue of the image is to a certain extent stilled: its emphasis on the 'holy myth' and its destruction for the sake of pure concept"¹⁶.

D. AN INHERITED INADEQUACY

Dionysius knows no "pure concept", only Jesus Christ. We touch here on a dilemma that was quite as much a part of his Christian inheritance as it was of his pagan learning. The αἰσθητός/νοητός language he employed was frankly inadequate to the several meanings he required of it: the multivalency of his symbols, the angelic world, and the Person of the Incarnate One whose Providence works all in all. He was, though, precisely heir to the ambiguities inherent in any attempt to articulate the Biblical Revelation in Platonistic language, that attempt which, together with certain of its difficulties, we have traced back to the first century, to Philo and even, to a certain degree, the Pauline corpus itself. While not denying this, and other tensions stretched nearly to breaking-point – e.g. presence now and eschaton, hierarchy itself and immediate vision, "legal" and "charismatic", subjective and objective – all of which are related and all of which again we believe to be at least as dependent on the limitations of human thought (and therefore, too, a witness to the mystery of the Faith) as on the inadequacies of Dionysius as a thinker, we still maintain that our author was if anything more successful in avoiding serious traps than many – if not most – of his predecessors. Concluding our citation from von Balthasar, we feel that he "saved the whole spiritual energy of the Alexandrians and Cappadocians and at the same time definitely banished the tendency to threaten the Incarnation, the visible Church, and the resurrection of the flesh"¹⁷.

15. This is exactly the argument of P. Rorem. See esp. his *Commentary*, 207-209.

16. *Herrlichkeit* II:187.

17. *Ibid.*

E. A PREVAILING FIDELITY

Dionysius, as Vanneste has suggested, may well have been influenced in his choice of a pseudonym by Acts 17:23 and the relevance of the ἄγνωστος θεός to his own endeavor, i.e., according to Vanneste, the exploration and use of pagan metaphysics to describe the encounter with the unknown and unknowable God¹⁸. For our part, though, we would choose to see in his chosen name a conscious declaration of faithfulness to the Pauline tradition, just as in his concluding “Letter” to St. John on Patmos, he both acknowledges and affirms his debt to the Johannine. In all, we feel that his contribution to a long tradition of Christian faith and witness is such that the “pseudo” attached to his pen name by generations of scholars pre-judges him unfairly, that von Balthasar is quite correct to note that “one speaks rightly of a deutero- and Trito-Isaiah, but not of a Pseudo-Isaiah”¹⁹.

Let us then review once again that faithfulness we maintain is a feature of “Deutero-Dionysius” by working backward from the seven points we singled out in Chapter V above. The treatises of the *CD*, the *CH*, *DN* and *MT*, are all in fact meditations on the (7) the soul as typified by the *EH*, thus on (6) the mystery of the altar. Dionysius, as he tells us himself, began at the center of the Church’s life, at Christ given and received in the Eucharist²⁰. Jesus is made known in the “breaking of bread”, and this “initiation of initiations [τελετή τελετῶν]” in turn opens one’s eyes to (5) the “theandric” reality of the Church which, although “hidden” in the present age, is still realized and discernable by and in the baptized faithful gathered for worship. Growing in faith and prayer and love, the believer arrives then at the apprehension of (4) this new reality as embracing the totality of created being, that he concelebrates with the angels to whose hosts he has been joined through the risen body of Jesus, who (3) has, in coming to a fallen world, dying, and rising again, enabled humanity to share even in God. Then (2) the initiate rises still higher in contemplation of the unique mystery to touch and sense the light of God himself, and (1) to “know” him in the darkness of his unattainable glory. Here together we discover united the Bible-Alexandrian-Cappadocian tradition, and finally the late Platonist milieu in which the Fathers – and certain authors found in Scripture – lived and wrote. In point seven we find the inheritance of Ephrem, Evagrius, and the Macarian *Homilies*, while in six we discern the echoes of the fourth-century mystagogues as well as of Scripture; in five, four and three the Origenists, Cappadocians and New Testament as well as elements borrowed from the Neoplatonist equations of mind-humankind-world

18. Vanneste, “Théologie Mystique”, 187.

19. *Herrlichkeit*, 152-153; see also Larsen, *Jamblique* 157, on Iamblichus’ use of a pseudonym in *de Myst.*: the false name “a une signification philosophique que derrière la pseudonymie dans la littérature philosophique se prouve justement la conception que ce qui est décisif, ce n’est pas de savoir qui a dit ceci ou cela, mais au contraire ce qui est”, i.e., to emphasize the content rather than the author.

20. *EH* III.1 425AB (79:18-80:4).

and their theurgists; and finally in two and one a tradition of speech about God that, while it takes and ultimately derives from the Neoplatonist and prior Hellenistic sources, still finds a basis as well in Scripture and, decidedly, in that treatment of the "Names" of God whose roots extend through the Cappadocians and Ephrem back to Clement and Philo.

F. AN ENDURING INFLUENCE

1. On piety and ascetic literature: a sketch of the Dionysian trajectory

Jean Vanneste was far from alone when he characterized the Areopagitica as a "lonely meteorite in the spiritual life of the Eastern Church" whose influence, "aside from the acceptance of a few scattered notions... was not decisive"²¹. Others are willing to accord Dionysius a certain influence, often a regrettable one, on Byzantine piety²², and even on the art and church architecture of the Byzantine middle ages²³. There is certainly something to be said for these views. In our own day, for example, a Roman Catholic scholar can, without even a single mention of Dionysius, write a general introduction to Orthodox worship whose tone is unmistakably Dionysian²⁴, while an American student of architecture, innocent of any acquaintance with the *CD*, can be found describing a Russian-American cathedral in ways that recall our analysis of the hierarchical vision in Chapter III above²⁵. We might add as perhaps early examples of Dionysian influence both the commissioning of the Sinai mosaic we discussed above in Chapter IV, and the addition to the Constantinopolitan liturgy of the offertory hymn of the Cherubikon²⁶.

Yet true as these views may be, in contradistinction to Vanneste and others, neither side in our opinion touches the quick of the matter, and each can easily counter the other. Architecturally, musically, iconographically, theologically and spiritually, it would be quite true to say that the main lines of Eastern thought and practice had been set well before the appearance of the *CD*. We saw the domed church as microcosm in Babai's hymn in honor of the cathedral at Edessa. Likewise, the traditions of hieratic iconography were certainly in place, or at least

21. "Genuine", 288-289. See also Bornert, *Les Commentaires*, 268, together with Hausherr in "Contemplation", *DSP* 2:317-318, and "Les Grands Courants", 125.

22. For example Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 83; Koch in *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 94 and 195-200; M. Lot-Borodine in "Initiation à la mystique sacramentaire de l'Orient" *RSPT* 24 (1935) 664-665 and 674, note 1; and von Balthasar in *Kosmische Liturgie*, 24.

23. For example, H.-J. Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy*, trans. M. J. O'Connell (NY: 1986) 33, and P. Scazzoso, *Ricerca sulla struttura del linguaggio dello Pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita* (Milan: 1967) 133-138.

24. R. Taft, "The Spirit of Eastern Worship" *Diakonia* XII (1977) 103-120.

25. F. West, "The Conquest of Space: Sacred Space at Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Chicago, Illinois" *SVSQ* 22 (1978) 153-167.

26. E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: 1961) 166, dates the hymn at 574 A.D. See also his discussion of Dionysian influence, 57-60.

acquiring their definitive form, by the middle years of Justinian's reign. Even more so does this apply to the triadology, soteriology, and christology (less, of course, the catastrophically violent quarrel over details) of the East. These had long been established by, in particular, the contribution of the Cappadocians. The two great fountainheads of ascetic spirituality, Evagrius and Macarius, had also written over a century before the *CD*. Finally, society and, together with it, the Christian Church had been set in hierarchical ways for centuries. What then did Dionysius have to add? Thus typically a Vanneste, for whom the *CD* was a fundamentally pagan irruption, can write that the corpus had no real effect – Byzantine Christianity being securely Christian by the sixth century – other than perhaps an occasional twitch in the vocabulary of subsequent generations. On the other hand, even those scholars who do admit a particular Dionysian impact do so, as it were (and with some exceptions, e.g. von Balthasar and Lossky), in ways that are frankly piecemeal, partial.

The Dionysian contribution was quite simply the synthesis of all the elements we have listed. Athens and Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cappadocia, the Egyptian Desert and the traditions of Syrian-inspired mystagogy and ascetical literature all meet in the corpus in a way that they had never met before. They were gathered into a unitary vision that was grounded on the double altar of the worshipping church and the individual, Christian soul. It is in this confluence that the power of the *CD* lies, and thus as well its genuine ability to shape the thought, prayer, art, liturgy, and indeed architecture of subsequent generations. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Dionysius marks the beginning of Byzantine theology proper. His is the framework within which everyone afterwards, from Maximus Confessor to Symeon the New Theologian to Gregory Palamas and Nicholas Cabasilas, would think and pray. This is a bold statement, and it demands some explanation. In what follows we shall try to give a thumbnail sketch of the Dionysian trajectory that stretches from 500 A.D. to the fall of Byzantium, and even beyond.

Let us begin with the Greek ascetic literature, for it is there we believe that the Dionysian trajectory is primarily to be traced. We recall that Syria-Palestine was the region whence the *CD* has long been thought to have come, and that the same area also saw the corpus' earliest commentators, claimants, and translators. Again, we remember that all of the latter (save Severus of Antioch, though he too began his career in a monastery and retained his links with the ascetic tradition) were connected in one way or another, whether as approving or disapproving, with the thought of Evagrius of Pontus. The next step in tracing the reception will take us to the first half of the seventh century and to Maximus the Confessor.

The connection between the Confessor and the Areopagite is well known, though Maximus is usually given the entire credit for the accomplishing the synthesis that we believe had in good part been effected first by Dionysius²⁷. Thus,

27. See, just for example, Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 83-84 and 99.

while most have taken it as expressing quite a different interpretation of the Church's worship, we believe that Maximus' *Mystagogy* covers in fact the exact same ground as our account of the *CD*, in particular of the *EH*²⁸. He presents the Church as a series of images or icons that represent, in the following order, God, the world, the human being, and the soul. The interpretation, furthermore, builds on the physical division of the church building into nave and sanctuary. Thus, for example, in *Mystagogy* 4, Maximus speaks of the human body as the nave, the soul as the sanctuary, and the *voûç* as altar²⁹. Everything meets ultimately in the one mystery of the latter³⁰, at which we discover the anticipation of the Resurrection³¹. The remaining and larger part of the commentary then goes through the liturgy from the entry of the clergy to communion³², and builds on the opening passages in order to portray the Church's common worship as an image- and communication- of the soul's encounter with and growth into Christ. In short, there is very little in Maximus' account that is new, i.e., that we have not met in our analysis of the *EH*. The binding thread of his *Mystagogy* is the assumption that the liturgy of the earthly church serves as the image at once of heaven and of the soul, and mediates between them. We certainly do hear the echoes of both Evagrius and Macarius, but our points are, first, that the latter have already met in the Areopagitica and, second, that Maximus is consciously in continuity with Dionysius' fusion of the two. The only thing un-Dionysian about the *Mystagogy* is the perfect absence of the Areopagite's repeated emphasis on the hierarch. Maximus has quietly dropped it. This, too, will be typical of the ascetical literature subsequent to the *CD*.

We also believe that we get a glimpse of the transmission of a tradition in the *Mystagogy*'s opening lines, a tradition moreover that probably takes us back to Palestine. Maximus opens by doing obeisance to the Areopagite. He does not, he tells, intend to repeat what the "divine Dionysius" had said so wonderfully, but will instead write about what the latter had, out of kindness, left for future generations to say³³. This remark has led most scholars to the conclusion that the Confessor, having made the requisite bow to an authority, intended to go on to write something quite different³⁴. We disagree, and think instead that Maximus assumes

28. See our analysis in Chapter IV above, esp. 219-222. For texts of the *Mystagogy*, we shall be citing *PG XCI* 657C-717D, and in parentheses the English translation by G. Berthold in *Maximus Confessor: Selected Writings* (New York: 1985) 186-197. For the standard interpretation of the *Mystagogy*, particularly as distinct from the *CD*, see Bornert, *Les Commentaires*, 83-104, most recently summarized by Rorem, *Commentary*, 121-122.

29. *PG* 672BC (Berthold 189-190).

30. *Myst.* 5, *PG* 681D-684A (195).

31. *Ibid.* 7 685BC (197).

32. *Ibid.* 8-24, 688B-717D (198-214).

33. *Ibid.* I, 660D-661B (184).

34. See again Rorem, *Commentary*, 121-122, and at greater length on the differences between Maximus and Dionysius, L. Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (New York: 1985) 149-173.

what we might call an interpretive context for the Areopagitica, and that that context is none other than, broadly speaking, the idea of the “little church” and of the *voûs* as altar that we found in Dionysius’ two unsung contributors, Macarius and Evagrius respectively. We suggest, further, that this context was one that had been handed down in some at least of the monasteries of the East, and in particular those of Christian Palestine.

The latter region is especially inviting because, if Maximus himself was not born there³⁵, then he certainly came into contact with it through his mentor, Sophronius, later Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had himself been the disciple in Palestine of his fellow Damascene, the sainted ascetic John Moschus³⁶. These two men take us back to mid-sixth century, that is, rather interestingly, to just about the time of the construction of the Sinai mosaic. Maximus is perhaps referring to one or the other of them when, just before and after his reference to Dionysius, he tells us of the “blessed elder”, μακάριος γέρων, who had taught him and whose wisdom he intends to pass on to his reader³⁷. The insights of the elder’s wisdom are, precisely, the *Mystagogy* itself. We see no reason to assume that Maximus is doing anything else here than witnessing to a monastically based tradition of interpretation of the Church’s communal worship. To be sure, he adds the grace of his own genius, but what he has to say is recognizably akin to what we have described below in Chapters VIII and IX, and very clearly of the same shape as our account of the Dionysian mystagogy. His reference to the latter is perfectly natural, and there is nothing disingenuous about it. He understands the Areopagite, first of all, as part of a continuum that includes Evagrius and Macarius. Secondly, he has himself been initiated into this tradition by a man (or men) who have read both the *CD* and its two predecessors (i.e., Macarius and Evagrius) in the same way. Thirdly, Sophronius and Moschus, if the one or the other is the

35. According to the Syriac *Life* of the Confessor recently discovered by S. Brock, though, he was a native of the area. See Brock’s “An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor” *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973) 299-346.

36. On Sophronius and Moschus, see C. von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem. Vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris: 1972) 57ff. For Moschus himself, see his *Pratum spirituale*, PG LXXXVII 2851 ff, and in English, *The Spiritual Meadow*, trans. J. Wortley (Kalamazoo: 1992), and Wortley’s “Introduction”, ix-xx. Of some note is the fact that the Eucharist and affirmations of its power occur with some frequency in the *Meadow*. For example, see *Meadow* 25 (PG 2869D-2872A; Wortley, 17) for the rule that only the ordained may offer the Eucharist, but 96 (2953B-2956A; 77-78) for the prayers of a holy (non-ordained?) ascetic as effecting the consecration; also the vision of the Holy Spirit’s descent at the epiclesis in 150 (1873C; 122-124); the sacraments’ connection with fire from heaven in 196 (3081B; 172-174); and the concelebration of the angels in 199 (3088AB; 177-178).

37. *Myst.*, Introduction, 657C and 661BC (183 and 184-185). See also in *Mystagogy* 1, 664D (186) and following through chapter 12, 689D (199) that the “old man” is quoted at the beginning of each chapter, and again beginning Chapter 24, 701D (206). For discussion on the identity of the elder, see T. Nicolaou, “Zur Identität des μακάριος γέρων in der *Mystagogy* von Maximus der Bekenner” *OCP* 49 (1983) 407-418.

“blessed elder”, take us back again to Palestine³⁸.

Palestine is also the monastic homeland of another major figure and conduit of the Dionysian inheritance, John of Damascus, a monk of Mar Sabbas. The impress of the Areopagite is particularly clear in the opening chapters of John’s handbook of doctrine, *De fide orthodoxa*, which takes especially from the *DN*³⁹. His Homily on the Transfiguration⁴⁰ also reflects a number of the corpus’ central themes: the Transfiguration itself, of course, and with it the *CD*’s emphasis on light as associated with the experience of divinity. While John does not, to our knowledge, touch on the specific subject of our inquiry, his *Apologies in Defense of the Images*, certainly a subject related to worship and thus to Dionysius, make notable use of the *CD*⁴¹.

Between the Confessor and the Damascene, however, we also find a writer at the imperial capital who makes use in the early decades of the eighth century of the *CD* (together with Maximus) in his interpretation of the liturgy. Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* “was for centuries the quasi-official explanation of the Divine Liturgy for the Byzantines”⁴². The composition is of interest for us in its “dual approach”. It juxtaposes an account of the liturgy as the earthly expression of heavenly realities, à la Dionysius, with the rite as a symbolical reenactment of salvation history in the style of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The “little church” aspect of the *CD* is, on the whole, absent, although something of the ascetic tradition’s emphasis on experience does show up later in the treatise. Germanus is clearly striving to incorporate a more “Platonist” reading of the liturgy with an emphasis on the events of Christ’s life – his birth, suffering, death and resurrection – and is probably doing so in response to the first rumblings of the imperial iconoclasm that would break out at the end of his patriarchate and, in fact, force him into exile⁴³. Thus, for example, the altar in his account emerges as both a sign of Christ’s tomb (the historical emphasis), and of the “heavenly and spiritual altar” where the earthly clergy represent the “immaterial and celestial powers” (Dionysius)⁴⁴. If the liturgy as symbol of the inner experience is not present, still we find a clear echo of Dionysius’ *MT* in Germanus’ portrayal of the celebrating bishop. The latter, at the time of the

38. We should note that Nicolaou, 417, places the elder in Chrysopolis.

39. See *Johannes von Damaskos: Die Schriften*. Ed. B. Kotter (Berlin) II:7-44. Eng. trans. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IX:1-18.

40. Kotter V:436-451. See esp. 438 and 448.

41. See Kotter III:84-85, 127-128, and 144-145. English translation by C. Roth, *St. John of Damascus on the Divine Images* (New York: 1980) 19-20, 34-35, 76, and 79. See also, for example, Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought and Byzantine Theology*, as well the work of J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christianity* (Chicago: 1974) 120, and more recently, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton: 1990), esp. 153-182.

42. *St. Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy*. Greek text with trans., intro., and commentary, P. Meyendorff (New York: 1984) 10.

43. See Meyendorff, *Ibid.* 42-52.

44. *Ibid.* 6:60-61, and Meyendorff’s comment, 43.

consecration, stands before the altar and throne of God as Moses stood before him on Sinai:

God truly spoke invisibly to Moses and Moses to God. So now the priest [i.e., bishop], standing between the two cherubim in the sanctuary and bowing on account of the dreadful and untemplable glory and brightness of the Godhead... is initiated even into the splendor of the life-giving Trinity⁴⁵.

At the beginning of the anaphora, the bishop leads "everyone into the heavenly Jerusalem, to his holy Mountain"⁴⁶, and, after the consecration, takes the sacred elements into his hands as Isaiah's seraph took the coal from the heavenly altar⁴⁷. We inevitably recall Dionysius on Isa 6:1ff in *CH XIII*, and quite especially the portrait of Moses as hierarch in *MT I.3*. As might be expected of a ruling bishop, Germanus thus preserves, among other things, just that emphasis on hierarchy and the hierarchy that we saw Maximus ignore. At the same time, the liturgy as icon of the "inner church" disappears. It would show up later in the Greek tradition, though, and would do so not only because Maximus and Dionysius were still being read in the monasteries (as they assuredly were), but also through a new infusion, once again via Palestine, of the current of Syriac spirituality that the Confessor and Areopagite both articulated.

Sometime in the tenth century and through (probably) the translating efforts of the monks of Mar Sabbas, Greek-speaking Christianity received part of the corpus of Isaac of Nineveh, and together with and under his name, treatises of other Syriac mystics, including Philoxenus of Mabboug and the remarkable John of Dalyatha⁴⁸. In these writers, whose concerns (especially John's) anticipate in striking ways the leading themes of later Byzantine Hesychasm, the Syrian tradition of the "little church" lived on⁴⁹. One might argue that it is Macarius, or the *Liber Graduum*, who simply lives on in these authors together with Evagrius, but that Dionysius has nothing to say to them. We disagree. Macarius and Evagrius were, indeed, perhaps the most important contributors to later Syriac spirituality⁵⁰, but we have seen that these lines had already come together in the

45. *Ibid.* 41:90-93.

46. *Ibid.* 90-91.

47. *Ibid.* 94-97.

48. For Isaac's corpus and the procession of transition, see the "Introduction" to *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston: 1984) lxxiv-xciv. For the inclusion of Philoxenus' "Letter to Symeon" and *Homilies* 15-17 and 31 by John, see *Ibid.* xci.

49. See on John of Dalyatha the article by R. Beulay, "Formes de lumière" *Cahiers d'Orientalisme* XX (1988) 131-141, and with specific reference to his anticipation of the Hesychasts, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha* (Paris: 1990) 440-461.

50. See, for example, R. Beulay, *La lumière sans forme*, 94, and S. Brock, *Spirituality in the Syriac Tradition* (Kottayam: 1989) 9-17.

CD, and we know that Dionysius was both translated and read by later Syriac authors⁵¹. Thus in the following passage from Isaac on Christ, we pick out the Dionysian themes of silence, ineffability, and the dark cloud:

O glorious God who dwells in ineffable silence. You have built for my renewal a tabernacle of love on earth where it is your good pleasure to rest, a temple made of flesh... Then you filled it with your holy presence so that worship might be fulfilled in it... an ineffable mystery... In wonder at it the angelic beings are submerged in silences, awed at the dark cloud of this eternal glory and at the flood of glory which issues from within this source of wonder, for it receives worship in the sphere of silence⁵².

Isaac then turns shortly afterwards to the microcosm, or inner temple, and the note of hiddenness:

*You have made my nature a sanctuary for your hiddenness and a tabernacle for your mysteries, a place where you can dwell, and a holy temple for your divinity*⁵³.

In John of Dalyatha we find the same echoes of Sinai (and the *MT*?) and Zion, together again with hiddenness, temple, cloud, glory, and the microcosm:

You who are hidden and concealed within me, reveal within me your hidden mystery; manifest to me your beauty that is within me; O you who have built me as a temple for you to dwell in, cause the cloud of your glory to overshadow inside your temple⁵⁴.

Arriving at Constantinople perhaps sometime around the date of his birth in 949, the corpus of Isaac's writings and a new emphasis on the "interior" or "ascetic" – and we would say proper – reading of the *CD* shows up with striking force in perhaps the greatest of Byzantine mystics, Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022), and continues in his disciple and biographer, Nicetas Stethatos (d. ca. 1090). Appreciation for Dionysius' influence on Symeon has grown somewhat in recent years, but to date no one has looked for the impress of the *CD*'s treatises on the hierarchies in a writer who was famed as a thorn in the side of church officials and a fervent advocate of charismatic authority⁵⁵. Yet this impress

51. See again Brock, *Spirituality*, 11-12 and 30-31.

52. Trans. S. Brock, *The Syrian Fathers on Prayer*, 349.

53. *Ibid.* 350.

54. *Ibid.* 362.

55. Compare, for example, K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt*, 99, note 2, who declared a century ago that Symeon had "keine direkte Kenntnis" of the *CD*, with B. Fraigneau-Julien, *Les sens spirituels selon Syméon le nouveau théologien* (Paris: 1985) 171-180, who admits to a considerable presence of the *DN* and *MT*. For the influence of the *CH/EH* on the New Theologian, see our "Hierarchy versus Anarchy", esp. 134-152.

is very clear. Symeon paraphrases *CH* I.3 in his XIVth *Ethical Discourse*⁵⁶, borrows from the *CH* again, together with *DN* III, to describe the “golden chain” of – not episcopal, but – charismatic succession⁵⁷, and defends the principle of the holy man’s authority to forgive sins in his Letter on Confession⁵⁸. It is thus no surprise to find his disciple, Nicetas, elaborating on the parallels between Symeon and the “divine Dionysius” in his “Preface” to the New Theologian’s Hymns⁵⁹, or in his own treatises, *On the Soul*, *On Paradise*, and especially *On Hierarchy*, advocating almost exactly the micro-macrocosm reading of hierarchy that we sketched above in our first four chapters⁶⁰. Both Nicetas and his master work quite hard in defense of the “interior” reading of the CDs, and we feel that in doing so they are largely in harmony with Dionysius’ own intentions, and certainly in concert with the tradition out of which the corpus came and within which it continued to be read in the ascetic milieu.

But it must be admitted both that this was not the only way the Byzantine Church read Dionysius, and that neither Symeon nor Nicetas was absolutely in agreement with the *CD*’s intentions. Turning first to the latter point, Nicetas’ characterization of the “true bishop” as the “man whose intellect... has been purified... illumined... and perfected into the perfect man”⁶¹, while it catches the greater part of the Dionysian hierarch, just as obviously dismisses the Areopagite’s attempt to underline and support the official role of the sacramental ministry. Nicetas, like Maximus before him and Macarius in the fourth century, is talking about the charismatic saint, the “blessed elder” or “man of God”. The ambiguities in Dionysius’ portrait of the clergy are resolved by going back to the picture of the Christian gnostic we saw first sketched by Clement and then embodied in the Desert Fathers. It is frankly difficult to see how the monks could have done otherwise. On the one hand, they embraced Dionysius’ account of the soul writ large in the physical church and liturgy, the meeting of personal experience and corporate adoration at the altars of church and heart, but they could not, on the other hand, accept what was obviously untrue, i.e., that all bishops are holy virtually *ex officio*. What Freudians used to refer to as the “reality principle” got in the way. Yet we still feel that the *CD* largely succeeded in its mission. It played a crucial role, we believe, in securing a unity between

56. *Traité éthiques*, ed. and trans. J. Darrouzès, *SC* 129, 424-443; and see “Hierarchy versus Anarchy”, 149-152.

57. See *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques, et pratiques* III.4. ed. and trans. J. Darrouzès, *SC* 51, 81; and compare *CH* IV.3 (181A), V (196B), and *DN* III (680C).

58. Text of the Letter in Holl, *Enthusiasmus*, 110-127. Compare in Dionysius’ *Epistle* VIII, as well as *EH* VII.3.7 (561B), and see again “Hierarchy versus Anarchy”, 134-142.

59. See *Syméon le nouveau théologien: Hymnes*, ed. and trans. J. Koder, *SC* 156, 106-132.

60. See Nicetas Stethatos: *Epîtres et opuscules*, ed. and trans. J. Darrouzès, *SC* 81; esp. *On the Soul* III.4.16 and 27 (76-78 and 88-90); *On Paradise* II.19 (176); and *On Hierarchy*, “Introduction” (300); IV.38-39 (340-342), and 36 (338).

61. *On Hierarchy* IV.38 (340).

sacramental practice and mystical experience. It could not, however, resolve the tensions between the Church's life in this world and its anticipation of the eschaton. No one ever has, nor can. Symeon and Nicetas were content with the tension.

Not everyone was, though. Certainly, during the nearly three centuries that stand between Symeon's death and the rise of the Hesychast Movement, the Byzantine Church authorities made a rather determined effort to put a damper on the influence of charismatics like the New Theologian. Tidy government was the order of the day, especially during the dynasty of the Comnenoi, and this emphasis had a decided effect on at least the official life of the Church⁶². It is in the context of this assertion of hierarchical authority (in the sense that we understand that phrase in modern English) that we find Metropolitan John of Ephesus appealing to the *CD*, and particularly to Dionysius' *Epistle VIII*, as a support for institutional structures, and especially as opposed to the claims lodged by uppity monks⁶³. John's message is clear. God and the "divine Dionysius" intended that everyone have a place in the Church, but that place – and the monks' place in particular – is most emphatically under the authority of the bishop.

The Hesychast Movement of the fourteenth century brings the ascetic and (we believe) more genuine reading of the Areopagtica back into the forefront, where it has very much remained to the present day. Gregory of Sinai (and note the geography of his name) is one of the earliest representatives of the movement, often indeed credited with sparking it. Remarkably, the ascetic or "interior" reading of the *CD*'s hierarchy appears – if not prominently, then at least – unambiguously in two of his *Profitable Chapters*. Chapter 112 speaks of the "spiritual priesthood" as the "sacred working [*ἱερωσύνη*]" of the intellect within the "altar of the soul"⁶⁴. In Chapter 43, though, we find an even more explicit joining of the *EH* with the *MT*, and quite in the sense that we understand Dionysius himself to have intended:

According to the Mosaic Law, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a tabernacle pitched by God, possessing the age to come behind two veils. And, while all who are priests of grace shall come into the first tabernacle, only as many as have hierarchically celebrated the Trinity here-below in the darkness of theology [shall enter] into the second. [These are the ones] who, before everything else, possess Jesus as their consecrator and hierarch

62. For an overview of the period, see J. M. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire: 867-1185* (London: 1937); and specifically for anti-charismatic attitudes on the part of the hierarchy, see the articles by P. Magdalinos, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century" in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London: 1980) 51-66, and J. Gouillard, "Quatre procès de mystique à Byzance" *REB* 19 (1961) 5-81.

63. See J. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits d'écclésiologie byzantine* (Paris: 1966) esp. 351, 371, 384, and 390.

64. *Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπιτικῶν*, ed. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (Athens: 1961. rep.) Vol. IV:51.

with respect to the Trinity. Entering into the tabernacle that he has pitched, they are the more manifestly illumined by his radiance⁶⁵.

Let us note the vocabulary and its associations with Sinai and Exodus: the “darkness [γνόφος] of theology”, light or “radiance”, “hierarchically”, “consecrator [τελετάρχης] and hierarch”. Implicit, as it is explicit in the first citation, is the thought that this is the inner liturgy of the soul. Dionysius is assimilated to Evagrius and Macarius, and that is exactly where we believe that he belongs.

In the later struggles of the Hesychasts against the opposition and ridicule of Barlaam of Calabria, Gregory Palamas emerged as the champion of the former. His articulation of the ascetic tradition was confirmed at the local, Constantinopolitan councils of 1341, 1347, and 1351. We have touched often enough on the essence-energies distinction, its importance in Dionysius and its defense by Gregory, not to have to go over the territory again. Suffice it to say here that, first, Palamas was engaged in the defense of a tradition, both of theology and of ascetic praxis, that long antedated him; second, that Dionysius was himself an inheritor and contributor to the same tradition. Barlaam appreciated neither fact⁶⁶. The heart of the struggle, moreover, was very much focused on the proper interpretation of the *CD*. Gregory himself draws the connection between Macarius’ light and Dionysius⁶⁷, stresses the Areopagite’s *ἔνωσις* as an experience beyond knowledge⁶⁸, turns to *DN* I.4 in particular and at several points for the glory of Thabor⁶⁹, and refers Barlaam to *DN* V.8 and XI.6 for his celebrated distinction between essence and energies⁷⁰. These are but a few examples of an ubiquitous Dionysian presence. With regard to our particular theme of the inner and outer church, Palamas does not express himself much. We do note, though, his understanding of the Dionysian hierarchy as primarily concerned with the inner life and assimilation to God⁷¹, and his passing observation that the saint is true temple of God⁷².

The inner and outer church in the context of the *EH* do, however, appear in the two classic books by Nicholas Cabasilas (d. ca. 1390), *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* and *On the Life in Christ*, that we shall make the conclusion of our

65. *Ibid.* 37.

66. It is the great merit of J. Meyendorff’s work on Gregory, esp. his “Introduction”, to have demonstrated Palamas’ continuity with his predecessors. On the other hand, Meyendorff did not accord Dionysius the same regard. Thus see Romanides, “Aspects”, esp. 250-262, who is helpful in redressing the balance.

67. See *Défense des saints hésychastes*, text, trans. J. Meyendorff (Louvain: 1959) I.3.3 (111-113).

68. For example, *Ibid.* I.3.20-29 (153-173), and II.5.68-69 (529-533).

69. For example, I.3.35 (185-189) and 43 (205-207); II.3.20 (429), 23 (433), 25 (437), and 32 (451-453).

70. *Ibid.* III.2.18-24 (675-683).

71. See *Ibid.* II.3.73-74 (539-543).

72. *Ibid.* III.1.31 (617-619); and cf. 38-40 (633-639).

sketch of the Dionysian trajectory⁷³. In his *Commentary*, Nicholas states that “the whole celebration of the mystery is like a unique portrayal of a single body, which is the work of the Savior”⁷⁴. He stresses, together with the “real presence”, that the liturgy is iconic. The celebration seeks “to set before us the divine plan, that by looking upon it our souls may be sanctified”—recall Dionysius’ *theoria* of the sacraments—since “an idea is more deeply impressed upon us if we can see it depicted”⁷⁵. In commenting on Baptism in the *Life of Christ*, he recalls *EH* II’s emphasis on this sacrament as the beginning of genuine existence. Here the Christian begins “to be”, and “until these things, we do not yet live”⁷⁶. This sacrament thus marks the beginning as well of our infinite ascent toward the fulfillment of the desire, ἐπιθυμία, that God has implanted in our nature⁷⁷. Nicholas then splits up *EH* IV’s meditation on the myron into a chapter on the chrism and anointing following Baptism and another, after his consideration of the Eucharist, on the consecration of the altar. In both he recalls Dionysius’ earlier work. The first, Chapter III, concludes with the reflection that the Church’s true priest and altar are one and the same. Christ is the offerer, the altar, and the sacrifice offered⁷⁸. The Eucharist, as in *EH* III, is the greatest of the sacraments, their completion, their true context and activation⁷⁹. Turning to the consecration of the altar, Cabasilas first, as in the pattern of the *EH*, describes the ceremony and then ponders its meaning. The latter is, quite simply, the burden of our argument concerning the *CD*. The hierarch approaching the altar in order to consecrate it is, Nicholas tells us:

...a vested type and image of the altar, which is man himself. If a man, as David says, “wash away all wickedness and become whiter than snow”, and recollects himself and bends in on himself and bows down, that makes God truly dwell in the soul and makes the heart an altar. The ceremonies are the signs of these things... [the bishop] exhibits the altar in himself before he enters the sanctuary⁸⁰.

The bishop, as “exemplar of the altar”, is moreover the sign “that human

73. For the critical edition of the Greek text of the *Commentary*, see *Explication de la divine liturgie*, ed. S. Salaville, SC 46bis (1967), and for the *Life in Christ*, *La Vie en Christ*, ed. M.-H. Congordeal, Books I-IV in SC 355 (1989), and V-VII in SC 361 (1990); for English, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty (London: 1983 rep.) and *The Life in Christ*, trans. C. J. de Catanzaro, with intro. by B. Bobrinskoy (NY: 1982, 2d ed.).

74. SC 62 (Hussey, 27).

75. SC 64 and 68 (Hussey 28 and 30).

76. *Ibid.* II.2 and 4, SC 138-140, and 156 (de Cat. 67-68 and 73).

77. *Ibid.* SC 218 (96); cf. also VII SC 180 (214).

78. *Ibid.* III SC 258-260 (111-112).

79. *Ibid.* IV SC 262-264 and 270-272 (113-114 and 116). See also Nicholas’ quotation of *EH* III.1, SC 284 (121).

80. *Ibid.* V SC 18 (151).

nature, alone of all things visible, is truly capable of becoming a temple of God and an altar"⁸¹.

The last two chapters of the book are devoted to the preservation of sacramental grace in the Christian life, and finally to a picture of the perfected believer. Once again, Nicholas touches on the heart as temple, and does so in such a way as to join the Church's public worship with the personal and private "liturgy" of the believer at prayer⁸². Bobrinskoy summarizes these chapters as follows: "At the heart of his teaching on mental prayer, Cabasilas would unite that interior Eucharist which is the uninterrupted invocation of the Name, with the frequent partaking of the heavenly Bread which is the sacramental root of the presence of Christ in the believer's heart... the 'real presence' of Christ both by invocation of the name and by communion"⁸³. While the tradition of the "Jesus Prayer", to which both Cabasilas and Bobrinskoy are alluding, was something that we do not find in Dionysius, the union and between the inward and outward liturgy is, and we believe that Nicholas takes it up in direct and conscious continuity with the Areopagite. In doing so, he is simply a witness to the uninterrupted tradition that long preceded the *CD*, provided the context to which Dionysius also gave conscious expression, and within which— as we have tried to indicate— he continued to be interpreted up to and including Cabasilas himself. The latter finishes up his treatise by recalling, at least to our mind, the concluding lines from the *CD's* *Epistle* X. We may see and know Christ God even in this life, though he yet remains partly hidden and partly revealed. This glimpse of the glory at once concealed and manifested in works of love is indeed the substance of the Christian life: to manifest the One who is love and who through love moves in us⁸⁴.

In our brief and fragmentary sketch of the post-Dionysian trajectory, we have found that it is substantially identical with the pre-Dionysian ascetic tradition that we outlined above in Chapters VIII and IX, and indeed with much of the material we discussed in Chapter VI in connection with Christian Alexandria. The *CD* is bracketed by a continuum. The point of this essay may therefore be summed up by stating that Dionysius was always, in both his own mind and in his readers', simply part of and a contributor to the tradition. He does not stand out, nor does he constitute in any significant way a break, interruption, or departure from the tradition. He did, indeed, contribute to it, as we noted above, and his was an important contribution that found a ready and welcoming readership. Those readers were primarily monks, who embraced the corpus because they recognized it as in harmony with their own concerns and emphases. If they added any "correctives" to the divine Dionysius, those came chiefly by way of quietly

81. *Ibid.* SC 20 (152).

82. See *Ibid.* VI SC 124-130 (191-193) and VII SC 152-156 (203-204).

83. "Introduction", *Life in Christ*, 33.

84. *Ibid.* VII.15 SC 219-220 (227).

dropping the Areopagite's effective identification of the ascetic saint with the bishop. This corrective was, admittedly, a necessary one. Dionysius had attempted the impossible, and the attempt just did not meet the test of reality. But the corpus as whole did, and it succeeded in its primary aim, i.e., that wedding of the ecclesial and the mystical which has ever since served to protect the Eastern Church from those divisions between the charismatic and institutional aspects of Christian life that have continued to trouble, on occasion, the Church of the West. As for Dionysius' christology and triadology, these were perfectly orthodox. A Maximus Confessor did no more, with regard to the christological issue, than turn the knob a little to adjust the focus. Neither was the Confessor the first to blend Evagrius and Macarius with the Cappadocians. Dionysius had done it before him. Maximus recognized this, and he summed it up perhaps most brilliantly in his *Mystagogy*.

We are not yet quite finished. Not all of the readers of the *CD* were monks. We have already noticed a slightly different "spin" on the corpus coming from bishops. Thus it is also the case that the Areopagitica, perhaps more by way of side effect than anything else, did have a certain influence on the shape of Christian society in the Eastern Empire. Our penultimate remarks will therefore turn briefly to that question.

2. On the self-identity of the Christian Oikoumene

The following is admittedly speculative, but we suggest that Dionysius more or less inadvertently made a contribution to the identification of the Christian Faith as the divinely-established sense and sacred order of the world, i.e., the world of the Eastern Roman Empire of the late fifth century. His was a time when the theology underlying the ancient order of pagan Rome had become a vanishing gleam in the eyes of lonely philosophers, while, on the other hand, the shape of the Christian *oikoumene* had more than begun to emerge. The hierarchical vision embodied in the *CD* helped perhaps to bridge the gap between the pagan and Christian social τάξεις, and so to aid in the latter's establishment.

A few words are in order on the pagan background. Jaeger tells us that from the earliest period of classical culture "the Greek polis was both state and church", and that the latter was particularly accentuated at the hands of Plato⁸⁵. The *Republic* saw the elaboration of the city as the soul of man writ large⁸⁶, the image indeed of absolute reality⁸⁷. With the rise of Empire to embrace the greater part of the known inhabited world this notion was duly expanded in keeping with the nature of the new cosmopolis. According to Cochrane⁸⁸, the state came to be present as the fulfillment of the divine logos in history, as truly a kind of theophany:

85. W. Jaeger, *Paideia* Vol. II: *In Search of the Divine Centre* (1944) 158.

86. *Ibid.* 240-241.

87. *Ibid.* 355.

88. C. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (1957) 63.

“the *religio* of this world”⁸⁹, a realized image of eternity itself “immune from the flux... [i.e.] mere movement”⁹⁰. This exaltation above time and change, together with an increasingly rigid social stratification, reached its peak (interestingly enough) at the end of the fourth century. Citing the Codex Theodosianus (VI.5.2) Cochrane remarks that “the apotheosis of the state was revealed as the apotheosis of immobility itself”⁹¹. This deified social structure may well have been influenced by – as well as influencing – the strictly determined tiers of being analyzed by the later Neoplatonists⁹².

It is our feeling that Dionysius, too, contributed to that identification of Imperium with Ecclesia which von Ivanka points to as occurring already in Eusebius⁹³. With his development of the notion of hierarchy and his exclusive centering upon the altar – the “centripetal” force of his whole system – he may well have acted to place the capstone on an edifice already in the building. While we do not at all agree that an analysis of the *CD* after the method of a Durkheim or Weber, as Goltz has attempted⁹⁴, is adequate to the Dionysian vision, there is still no denying that the corpus as read from a certain, narrow angle could not but reinforce the social and political status quo. As much as the idea itself of hierarchy, this must have been the effect – so powerful because in that society so natural – of that focus on eternity which is so much a feature of the *CD*. The work of our hierarchy continues as now until the consummation of the Age, but the Church’s presence between the two Advents constitutes a kind of pause. It is filled, certainly, with the presence of Heaven and the activity of salvation, but it is no less essentially a pause, a hush. True, it is not difficult to see why Hathaway declared this system non-political, “devoid of citizenship”⁹⁵. Our author had no interest whatever in the forms and forces of human society and history. Everything outside the sanctified sphere of the hierarchy remains, in a sense, unreal – *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Yet it would be no less correct to say that, in the manner of a side-effect, his could not help but be a markedly political statement. The elaborate apparatus of worship that the *EH* assumes belonged properly within the basilicas and cathedrals of late Roman cities. How, in those buildings, in that society, and given the “eternalist” bias and “centripetal” thrust of the Dionysian system, could the *CD* have done otherwise in such a setting than to

89. *Ibid.* 73.

90. *Ibid.* 82.

91. *Ibid.* 323.

92. The view, at least, of A. C. Lloyd, “The Later Neo-platonists” *CambHist*, 274.

93. *Rhomärreich und Gottes Volk* (1968) 58; see also F. E. Cranz, “Kingdom and Polity in Eusebius of Caesarea” *HTR* XLV (1952) 48-66; and G. Kretschmar, *Studien*, 8. For Eusebius himself, see for example *De laudibus Constantini*, PG XX 1316-1440. And for an extended discussion of the Eusebian contribution and those following him, F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy* (1966) Vol. II:611-850.

94. Goltz, *Hiera Mesitea*; see our Introduction above, 35.

95. Hathaway, 124.

appear to lend support – if not ultimate sanction – to the forms, and so by extension to the existence itself, of the later Empire? The immense Church of Holy Wisdom, built by Justinian not long in fact after the appearance of the *Areopagitica*, would come more and more to be regarded as the true heart of the Empire and its society, the latter depending on the central mystery hierarchically enacted round that great altar for its justification, and seeing in the sacred action accomplished there both the paradigm of its own life, and reassurance in the hope that, given this God-instituted and protected center, it would itself abide until the end of time. Dionysius may therefore be read as having caught and perfectly expressed the mind of an age at once Christian, yet still carrying the ancient dream of a society whose polity would reflect, so far as possible in the realm of flux, the city of the gods.

G. A LAST WORD AND A LITTLE SPECULATION

Many years ago we remember watching a television program devoted to the making of animated motion pictures by the Disney studios. One of the striking features, almost the signature, of Disney animations was always the remarkable quality of their backgrounds, the rich detail and impression of depth in the forests, landscapes, and interiors of the homes and castles through which the cartoon characters moved. In the days before computers, this impression used to be created through the use, if we recall correctly, of “transparencies”, sheets of clear material carrying the illustration of one or another of the desired features of the background— a tree, a mountain, a chair, etc.— stacked one atop the other in as many layers as were required to create the desired effect. The camera was then angled in such a way as to film through the piled sheets in order to produce an image that allowed the viewer to believe, given the willing suspension of disbelief, that he or she was looking at a single scene: Sleeping Beauty’s cottage in the forest, Cinderella’s kitchen, or Pinocchio’s village in its alpine valley.

What we have tried to do in each half of this essay somewhat parallels this process. In the opening chapters we sketched the layers of the Dionysian vision, from God’s procession and return, to the individual, created being’s reflection of the same, to the worlds within which the latter moves and has his or her being, to the detailed examination of the our particular world, the Church given us in Christ. Turning to Dionysius’ Christian sources in the second half, we proceeded by describing the series of contributing ideas and systems in roughly chronological order: from the beginnings of the NT texts to the Alexandria of Philo, Clement, and Origen, to the Cappadocians, to the Egyptian Desert of the monastic fathers and Evagrius of Pontus, and finally to the Christian Syria of Ephrem, the *Macarian Homilies*, and Symeon Stylites. If each level or layer were to represent a kind of “transparency”, then we would ask the reader to stand back and, like the Disney camera, try to catch the picture of the whole. We do not think that it will require a suspension of disbelief to catch sight of that shape that we promised would be the

subject of our essay. The Dionysian synthesis is a rich blend and profound, its depth the product of centuries of reflection on the Christian mystery in the light of much that was best in the tradition of Plato and his successors. Only a powerful and generally successful blend and synthesis of past thinkers and saints could have won the approbation that the *CD* in fact received, or have enjoyed the influence that it has exercised from its first appearance to the present day. To argue otherwise, it seems to us, is to fail to appreciate one or more of the layers that comprise the Dionysian vision, and to seek in addition to maintain that those who received it so gladly were either foolish or fundamentally dishonest. We believe that they were neither. If we may be permitted a little oversimplification in order to put the matter bluntly, we would choose to sum up the question of Dionysius' reception with the statement: the monks have always known better. It was primarily they who received the *CD*, just as it was they— together with their ancestors in Clement's gnostic and Origen's didaskalos— who contributed the most important layers to Dionysius' final picture.

By way of concluding the long journey of this book, we cannot resist some mild speculation, or at least a few questions. What kind of man, we wonder, could have written this corpus? He obviously had to have been connected somehow with monasticism and the ascetic tradition. He was just as obviously associated with and concerned for the organized worship and officers of the Christian Church, and quite (even overly?) sensitive to the dangers that an untrammelled, ascetic charismaticism posed for ecclesial unity and sacramental life. Let us therefore assume that he was both a monk and a bishop. Further, he was someone who was intimately familiar with a very considerable library of pagan philosophy and Christian literature. From Plato to Proclus among the Hellenes, from the scriptures through the Cappadocians, Evagrius, and the Syrian writers, he moves with ease and assurance. Nor does he simply juxtapose his sources, but he integrates them and puts them to work in the service of a single, integrated and comprehensive vision. As we saw when we treated his use of the "sudden", he was fully capable of taking a single word or phrase and, through it, alluding not just to one source or set of sources, but to several— in the case of the ἐξαιφνης to Platonism, the scriptures, the ascetic writings of an Evagrius, and even perhaps to a work like the *Life* of the first stylite— and make all of them resonate in harmony with his purpose. It seems to us that this ability argues not merely for a writer of singular intelligence, spiritual depth, and wide reading, but also for someone who has lived with and pondered his sources for many years. We therefore suggest that the *CD* is not the product of a young man, or even one of middle years, but of someone nearing the end of his life— though still in command of all of his intellectual powers.

The picture of "Dionysius" that comes to our mind is therefore of an aging monk-bishop sitting before his writing table in the quiet of his residence, perhaps a monastery, putting the impressions of his long study together with the fruits of his ascetical and (yes) mystical experience, and seeking to set them down in such a

way as to focus attention as much as possible on the ideas he wants to emphasize and, since the glitter of worldly fame and influence no longer attracts him, as little as possible on himself⁹⁶. He admires the Platonists, holds Origen and the other Alexandrians in high regard⁹⁷, and is devoted to SS. Paul and John the Divine. He is the product of the trinitarian debates that produced the Cappadocians' response, and equally of the ascetic traditions that led to Evagrius and Macarius, though extreme tendencies among some of the monks also trouble him deeply. He abhors the alarms and violence of the christological controversies, and— who could blame him?— wants no part of them⁹⁸. The Emperor Zeno's *Henotikon* is the official line of the imperial church at the time our author is writing and, since the decree was after all promulgated in order to keep the peace by avoiding controversy, it suits our old man just fine. What better vehicle, therefore, might he have found to carry his particular purposes in writing than the pseudonym that he did in fact choose? Dionysius was an associate of St. Paul, and a philosopher. He was also a witness to the Apostolic beginnings of Christianity and, as such, at least equal in antiquity— and thus in authority— to the ancient tradition of the *ihidaya*. Finally, Dionysius was converted before the altar of the "unknown God" who, as St. Paul's sermon in Acts 17 sought to demonstrate, had been definitively revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ and Word of the Father. It was an admirable choice, and it worked very well indeed. Perhaps, too, our supposition that "Dionysius" was an old man might help in replying to the question of the *CD*'s missing treatises. The answer could be quite simply that he did not live to write them.

Now, we grant that everything about this portrait is merely plausible surmise and in no way "proof" of anything, but it does seem to fit with our reading at least of the *CD*. It also matches up rather well, we think, with one (and only one) of the candidates for the corpus' authorship that we noted above in the opening pages of our introduction. This is Peter the Iberian, whose case was first put forward by E. Honigmann in the 1950's and reopened very recently by M. van Esbroeck⁹⁹. Both Honigmann and van Esbroeck marshal complex arguments involving esoteric details of calendrical calculation and the analysis of episcopal sees in the late fifth century. These are frankly beyond our competence¹⁰⁰. What does catch our eye is

96. See Larson's remarks on the use of pseudonymity, page 369, note 19 above.

97. See J. M. Rist, "The Weakness of the Soul", 160, on Dionysius' perhaps deliberate echo in *Ep.* VII (1080AB) of the charge, recorded by Eusebius (*E.H.* VI.19), that Porphyry leveled against Origen.

98. See esp. his *Epistle* VI (1077B).

99. E. Honigmann, *Pierre l'Ibérien* (1952), and M. van Esbroeck, "Peter the Iberian and Dionysius the Areopagite" *OCP* 59,1 (1993) 217-227.

100. We might note, though, that van Esbroeck, 222-223, responds not unimpressively to I. Hausherr's critique of Honigmann on the christological issue. See the latter's "Le Pseudo-Denys est-il Pierre l'Ibérien?" *OCP* 19 (1953) 247-260, and also R. Roques, "Pierre l'Ibérien et le corpus dionysien" *RHE* (1945) 69-98.

the way in which Peter, as presented by the Syriac *Life* that we still possess¹⁰¹, and as summarized by both Honigmann and van Esbroeck, seems to pull together in his person and in his circumstances nearly all of the features of our little portrait. Born and raised in Georgia until his thirteenth year¹⁰², he came from a Church that had been evangelized and greatly shaped by Syrian monastics¹⁰³. Raised for eight years in the court of the devout Theodosius II¹⁰⁴, he had surely the occasion to acquire some familiarity with at least a smattering of the theology current in Constantinople, perhaps especially of the Cappadocians—such as Gregory Nazianzus, the one-time bishop of the city. He could as well have been initiated into late Neoplatonism there. The Empress Eudocia, with whom he was very close¹⁰⁵, was a native of Athens and a convert from the cultivated paganism (read Neoplatonism) of the ancient city¹⁰⁶. Interestingly, the Empress is reported to have been deeply influenced late in life by Symeon Stylites¹⁰⁷. Peter then travels to Palestine in the company of his friend and mentor, another Georgian named John Mithridates¹⁰⁸, in order to frequent the venerable ascetics of the Holy Land and there embrace the monastic life. On arrival in Jerusalem, he and his companion are warmly welcomed by Melanie the Younger, grand-daughter of Evagrius' correspondent and Rufinus' patron¹⁰⁹. In 452 he returns to the holy city to be consecrated bishop by the monophysite patriarch, Theodosius, and is assigned to the town of Mayuma near Gaza where he had previously been residing in monastic retreat¹¹⁰. Peter's proximity to Gaza is itself of interest since the city boasted a soon to be thriving school of Christian Neoplatonism¹¹¹. Peter spends some time shortly afterward in Alexandria and the surrounding desert of the ascetics in support of the opposition to Chalcedon¹¹², and returns to the Holy Land to complete his life in 491 on the coast near Jamnia, at a resort that "was crown property, and had once been the residence of the Empress Eudocia"¹¹³. Among his dying words, according to his biographer, was the advice to "meditate

101. See the translation by D. M. Lang, in *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London: 1976. rep.) 58-80. References following will be from the latter.

102. *Life*, 58-59.

103. See Vööbus, *Hist. Syr. Asc.* II:354-360.

104. *Life*, 60-64.

105. *Ibid.* 60 and 67.

106. See van Esbroeck, "Peter the Iberian", 220, citing in particular the *Church History* of Nicephorus Xanthopoulos, PG CXLVI 1129-1132; 1223-1240 (esp. 1237A).

107. *Ibid.* 221.

108. *Life*, 64-65.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.* 69.

111. See the pleasant introduction to this unsung center of Christian life in Palestine by G. Downey, *Gaza in the Sixth Century* (1963) esp. 106-116. The town was also a melting pot, a center where Greek and Aramaic cultures and languages converged, 50-51.

112. *Life*, 71-73.

113. *Ibid.* 77.

on the writings of the saintly bishop, Basil [the Great], concerning the ascetic life"¹¹⁴.

Two more items, among the several miracles that the *Life* reports, draw our attention. The first occurs during Peter's stay in Constantinople. While struggling over the mystery of the Trinity, he prays for help and heaven sends it. He has a vision of the Apostle Peter leading him up "to a high place" where he sees the Trinity in the form of three lights, "inaccessible and incomprehensible... one essence, one nature, one glory, one light, one Godhead in three hypostases", with the middle light carrying in its center "the features of the Nazarene"¹¹⁵. We are reminded of the discussion of the Trinity in, especially, *DN* II.4 and 7, the "lamps" and "superessential lights" respectively. We might also recall the appearance of Jesus in light to Paul on the road to Damascus that we argued was part of the background to *Epistle* III and the ἐξαίφνης. Our second passage from the *Life* is quite reminiscent of another important theme in the *CD*. Peter, we learn, at first sought to escape the burden of episcopacy by doing himself severe injury (falling off of a cliff), but was prevented by a divine voice calling him instead to the task. He submitted and was consecrated but, as his biographer tells us, "he would not perform any church services until he had been admonished by the voice of God"¹¹⁶. Here it is difficult not to recall both Carpus' refusal in *Epistle* VIII to celebrate the Eucharist without a vision first, and Dionysius' remarks in *EH* VII.3.6-7 on the hierarch as the interpreter of the divine judgement because moved by the "divine spirit".

Taken in a sympathetic spirit, there is little in our portrait that does not find some correspondence, or at least potential for correspondence, in Peter's *Life* and the people associated with it. He must have been acquainted with the Syrian tradition if only via his native Georgia, though as bishop of Mayuma it must also have been the case that he had Aramaic speakers among his flock. He specifically mentions Basil the Great, and it is hard to see how he could have avoided the other Cappadocians after having lived in the imperial capital. Not only does he meet Melanie, but his whole life in Palestine— not to mention the years spent in Egypt— places him in the regions where the Evagrian and other ascetic writings were circulating. His see is close to a burgeoning center of Neoplatonist studies, to which philosophy the Empress herself could also have introduced him some time before. Even Symeon Stylites makes an appearance. His vision of the Trinity and experience of the heavenly voice recall similar notes in the *CD*. Finally, it is from Palestine that we receive the earliest commentary on Dionysius, John of Scythopolis' Scholia.

Unfortunately, there is still little that we can do with all this, and certainly nothing that would pin Peter down as the author of the *Areopagitica*. The lack of extant works under the ascetic bishop's own name presents the greatest obstacle

¹¹⁴. *Ibid.* 78.

¹¹⁵. *Ibid.* 62.

¹¹⁶. *Ibid.* 70.

to a definitive “yea” or “nay”. Thus again, while we may talk of possibilities, the lack of hard evidence rules out any end to the quest for Dionysius’ identity. If Peter was he, then he guarded his anonymity very well. On the other hand, we feel that even if Peter was not the elusive Dionysius, the author of the *CD* must have been someone very like the Iberian bishop. We might remember John of Scythopolis’ and John Philoponus’ defense of the apostolic origins of the corpus, along with Severus of Antioch’s efforts to keep “our Dionysius” out of the hands of the Chalcedonians¹¹⁷. Whoever the author was, he had the respect of his contemporaries. If he was not on the Chalcedonian side, then it would certainly have suited John of Scythopolis to affirm the pseudonym, just as the latter was pushed by Severus and Philoponus in order to support their cause. Both sides were playing the same game, and if Severus knew that the author was one of his own, it is easy to see why he might have felt frustrated at seeing the wrong party lay claim to him. All three men mentioned, together with a Sergius of Reshaina (recall Alexandria and in Evagrius as points in common with Dionysius), could very likely have known the author, or at least known of him. Peter the Iberian was a holy man, someone in whom all the combatants could have recognized their own deepest convictions about the Christian life. How many sainted monk bishops, one wonders, were there in the region? And how many of those might have possessed the requisite learning and intellect?

We are left with questions. Still, we think that the questions we are left with may point in directions at least as fruitful as much of the discussion over the past century. The Syrian tradition, for one, should certainly be explored in connection with Dionysius, and especially that confluence of late Platonism and Christian asceticism that we picked out already at work in Macarius – and Evagrius, too, for that matter. Christian Palestine should take center stage. The Merkabah tradition began there. So did the speculations about the Sinai theophany we find, for example, in the Qumran documents. The New Testament is carrying on local traditions that we pick up later in the Christian ascetics and finally Dionysius. Palestine produces the earliest commentaries, and it continues to be a center, if our considerations of Maximus’ *Mystagogy* are at all on the mark, while there is no guesswork at all about where John Damascene did his theology. Palestine is the center, a meeting point from New Testament times and before of Greek and Jew. It is therefore altogether appropriate that half a millenium after it had given birth to Christianity, already a fusion of Hellenic and Semitic elements, the Holy Land should have produced a still nameless Syrian (or Oriental of some kind) who

117. A point for which I am indebted to an as yet unpublished paper on Dionysius’ reception by Mr. J. Lamoreaux, given in June of 1993 at the conference of the North American Patristics Society at Loyola University, Chicago.

claimed the patrimony of Greece and the mantle of the Apostles in the service of the Word made flesh.

*Καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα
τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενὴς παρὰ Πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος
καὶ ἀληθείας.
John 1:14*

*Καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ,
ὁ γὰρ Κύριος ὁ Παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἐστίν,
καὶ τὸ ἄρνιον.
Καὶ ἡ πόλις οὐ χρειαν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου. . .
ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν.
Revelation 21:22-23*

ABBREVIATIONS

PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTIONS

ACW	<i>Ancient Christian Writers</i>
ANF	<i>A Select Library of the Antenicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Louvain)
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> (Louvain)
Jaeger	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> (ed. W. Jaeger et alia)
Lampe	<i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i> (ed. G. H. W. Lampe: 1963)
LCC	<i>Library of Christian Classics</i> (Philadelphia)
Loeb	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i> (Camb. MA)
NPNF	<i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalia</i>
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>

JOURNALS AND OTHER COLLECTIONS

AfR	<i>Archiv für Religionsgeschichte</i>
AHDLM	<i>Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age</i>
AOC	<i>Archives de l'orient chrétien</i>
Aug	<i>Augustianum</i>
BAGB	<i>Bulletin de l'association Guillaume Budé</i>
BLE	<i>Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique</i>
Byz	<i>Byzantion</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CambHist	<i>The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy</i> (ed. A. H. Armstrong [Cambridge: 1967])
CH	<i>Church History</i>
ClassQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CPhilog	<i>Classical Philology</i>
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DRev	<i>Downside Review</i>
Dsp	<i>Dictionnaire de Spiritualité</i> (Paris: 1932—)
EB	<i>Études Byzantines</i>

ECQ	<i>Eastern Churches Quarterly</i>
ECR	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
EO	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
EOB	<i>East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period</i> (ed. N. G. Garsoian, T. F. Mathews, R. W. Thompson [Wash.D.C.: 1982])
EphL	<i>Ephemerides liturgicae</i>
EtPG	<i>Études de philologie grecque</i>
FZPT	<i>Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie</i>
GOTR	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
Greg	<i>Gregorianum</i>
HistJ	<i>Historisches Jahrbuch</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IPQ	<i>International Philosophical Quarterly</i>
Ir	<i>Irenikon</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LM	<i>Le Muséon</i>
MessPR	<i>Messenger de l'Exarchat du Patriarchat Russe en Europe Occidentale</i>
MonS	<i>Monastic Studies</i>
NAG	<i>Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaft in Göttingen</i>
OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OStud	<i>Ostkirchliche Studien</i>
OSyr	<i>Orient Syrien</i>
ParO	<i>Parole d'Orient</i>
PBR	<i>Patristic and Byzantine Review</i>
Philog	<i>Philologus</i>
PJ	<i>Philosophisches Jahrbuch</i>
RAM	<i>Revue d'ascétique et de mystique</i>
RBPH	<i>Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire</i>
REA	<i>Revue des études augustinienes</i>
REB	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RHLR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuse</i>
RHPR	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RMfP	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
RP	<i>Recherches de philosophie</i>
RSP	<i>Recherches des sciences philosophiques</i>
RSPT	<i>Recherches des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de science réeigieuse</i>
RT	<i>Revue thomiste</i>

<i>RTL</i>	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
<i>SacE</i>	<i>Sacris erudiri</i>
<i>Schol</i>	<i>Scholastik</i>
<i>Sob</i>	<i>Sobornost</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
<i>SuCD</i>	<i>Studien über christlichen Denkmaler</i>
<i>SVSQ</i>	<i>St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly</i>
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>SymbO</i>	<i>Symbolae Osloensis</i>
<i>TAV</i>	<i>A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus</i> (ed. R. H. Fischer [Chicago: 1977])
<i>TSA</i>	<i>Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den Östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter</i> (ed. M. Schmidt, C. F. Geyer [Regensburg: 1982])
<i>TU</i>	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen</i>
<i>TVM</i>	<i>Théologie de la vie monastique</i> (Paris: 1961)
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> (ed. G. Kittel [Stuttgart: 1932-1973])
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologisches Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VerC</i>	<i>Verbum Caro</i>
<i>ZAM</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Askeze und Mystik</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZRG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte</i>